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# NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL Monterey, California



## THESIS

THE IMPACT OF THE INTIFADA ON  
PALESTINIAN LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

by

Jeanne Marie Nazimek  
December 1990

Thesis Advisor:

Dr. Ralph Magnus

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The Impact of the Intifada on Palestinian Leadership  
Development

by

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Lieutenant, United States Navy  
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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

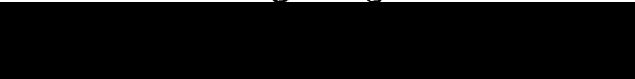
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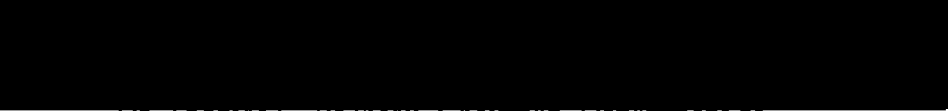
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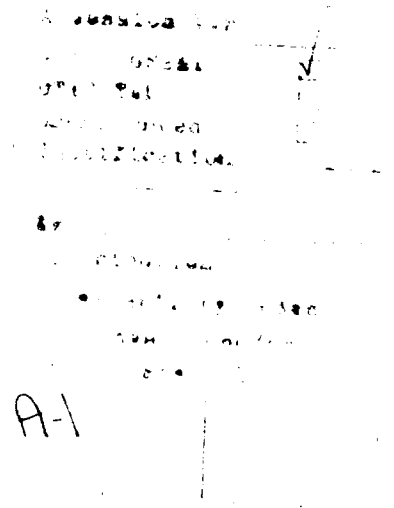
  
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## ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on the leadership, both internal and external, of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories of Israel, in an effort to determine if any internal political groups exist that are capable of challenging the authority of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). Background information includes the rise of Palestinian nationalism and the history of politics in the West Bank and Gaza Strip since the 1967 War. The primary factor influencing the current leadership transformations is the Palestinian uprising or intifada, that began in December of 1987 and continues today. The internal leadership of the uprising, including the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU), the Islamic fundamentalist groups, and the traditional notables, are all considered as possible challenges to the PLO's leadership. The external PLO leadership, its primary left wing components and their relationship to the intifada, are also presented.



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## I. BACKGROUND

After the 1967 War, Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip added some 1.7 million Palestinians to its population. The West Bank, Gaza Strip and Sinai peninsula were all to be used as bargaining chips in a "land for peace" negotiated settlement. In 1978, with the signing of the Camp David Accords, the Sinai was returned to Egypt and the West Bank and Gaza were to be administered under a five year autonomy program. The later part of the treaty was never implemented by Israeli Prime Minister, Menachem Begin who as a revisionist, supported the Jabotinsky idea of a "Greater Israel" in all of historic Palestine. Lacking Palestinian support, the general consensus considering autonomy another word for continued Israeli control, the Camp David Accords' intentions for the occupied territories failed to provide a viable solution.

Although Israel actively engaged in secret dialogue with Jordan's King Hussein from 1967 until 1977<sup>1</sup> in an attempt to resolve the Palestinian problem, it was not until after Camp David that King Hussein became the primary focus of Israeli and eventually U.S. attempts at peace. Jordan was to participate in the process of implementing the Camp David agreement however, like the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and the rest of the Arab world, Jordan rejected the autonomy solution. Despite this, the King was considered a reasonable negotiating partner with whom Israel could work in finding a viable solution for peace. Like Israel, Jordan also had an interest in preventing the establishment of an independent Palestinian state and containing PLO influence and terrorist activity.

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<sup>1</sup> Aaron S. Klieman, Israel and the World After 40 Years, (New York, NY: Pergamon-Brassey International Defense Publishers, Inc., 1990), p. 224.



The reemergence of the Palestinian nationalist movement, the rise of the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinians and the subsequent decline of Jordanian popularity in the territories, ended the solely Jordanian option and brought to the fore, the Jordanian-Palestinian option. The PLO however, was not considered a party to possible negotiations. Jordan, therefore, acted as interlocutor between the PLO and Israel, as each refused to recognize the legitimacy of the other. The terrorist activities of the PLO ensured Israel would not consider the organization's leader, Yasir Arafat, a party to negotiations. "...whenever it appeared as though the public mood in Israel might become more receptive to considering either the wisdom or the practicality of sitting down and talking directly with the Palestinians, some timely act of violence by Fatah or any of the other PLO factions silenced voices for change, poisoning the atmosphere for months and years to come."<sup>2</sup>

The terrorist activities of the PLO have only served to cement the Israeli-Jordanian relationship and further alienate Israel from the PLO. After the 1974 Rabat conference, where the PLO was proclaimed the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people by the Arab world, it became blatantly obvious that Jordan could not act unilaterally on behalf of the Palestinians. King Hussein neither had the legitimate authority nor the popular support to negotiate terms of peace. This new development forced Hussein to "...approach his relations with Israel in the narrowest terms of self-preservation...his penchant for fence-sitting - however understandable on his part, translated into Israeli indecision and paralysis on the most vital issue of bringing the Arab-Israeli conflict to an end diplomatically."<sup>3</sup>

A resolution to the conflict appeared to be near in 1985 when Hussein and Arafat entered into a joint Jordanian-Palestinian agreement for negotiating peace. The accord

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<sup>2</sup>Klieman, p. 221.

<sup>3</sup>Klieman, p. 230.

affirmed the principle of exchanging territory for peace and called for settling the Palestinian problem in accordance with UN security council resolutions under an international forum, to include the Soviet Union and other permanent members of the UN Security Council.<sup>4</sup> Despite the "implicit" recognition of Israel by Arafat, Foreign Minister Shamir dismissed the pact, stating Israel would agree to a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation but not a Jordanian-PLO one. Asher Susser, an expert on the PLO and Jordan, considered the pact in pragmatic terms:

Hussein needs Arafat for legitimation. Arafat needs Hussein for access into the peace process.<sup>5</sup>

Susser, when confronted by Israeli statements that ignoring the pact might help to further weaken Arafat, replied:

You can stand on your head and dance a jig, but the fact is Arafat is still Mr. Palestine. He is still the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and he is still a factor to be reckoned with.<sup>6</sup>

In a not uncommon difference of opinion between Israel's two major political parties, Labor and Likud, under the second National Unity Government, Prime Minister Shimon Peres took a slightly different position from Shamir on the Accords. Peres welcomed the talks but also refused to deal directly with the PLO, instead recommending Arafat appoint moderate Palestinian figures who were not "known" members of the PLO, to represent the Palestinian side.<sup>7</sup> Despite his claims that Israel was ready to take "bold steps" towards

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<sup>4</sup>Thomas L. Friedman, "Shamir Calls Jordan-PLO Pact in Not Way an 'Opening to Peace,'" in The New York Times, (February 25, 1985), p. A1.

<sup>5</sup>Friedman, p. A4.

<sup>6</sup>Friedman, p. A4.

<sup>7</sup>Thomas L. Friedman, "Peres Cautiously Welcomes Call for Direct Mideast Talks," in The New York Times, (February 26, 1985), p. A10.

peace. Peres also balked at the idea of an international conference. On a visit to Washington to discuss the peace plan with President Reagan, Peres failed to mention the role of the PLO in negotiations. "'With our hand of peace extended across the Jordanian River, we call upon our eastern neighbor to heed and accept this sincere invitation.'"<sup>8</sup> Such rhetoric exemplifies the strong Israeli attachment to Jordan and total faith in the Jordanian option as the sole path to peace, despite eighteen years of failure. It also demonstrates Israel's naivete in believing that King Hussein held enough popular support to proceed without the PLO.

One year later, the Hussein-Arafat accord was abandoned with the King calling the PLO "untrustworthy" and declaring:

We do not want to deal with the PLO anymore...The PLO leadership has proved that its priorities are not identical with our priorities or with those of the Palestinian people.<sup>9</sup>

Arafat's (and the PLO's) refusal to accept any limitations on the PLO appointments of a delegation and failure to expressly accept UN resolution 242, (which calls for a peaceful solution to the conflict and requires recognition of Israel's right to exist within secure and recognized borders), and renounce terrorism, caused the collapse of the pact. Even if the pact had survived however, it is highly unlikely the PLO would have ever been accepted by Israel as a partner to peace. The land for peace option, the Jordanian-Palestinian goal of the talks, would probably have been defeated by the Israeli government who needed to balance the Labor party's acceptance of land for peace with the Likud party's desire to retain control over the territories.

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<sup>8</sup>Bernard Weinraub, "Israel Extends 'Hand of Peace' to Jordanians," in The New York Times, (October 18, 1985), p. 10.

<sup>9</sup>"Hussein Drops a Yearlong Effort to Join in Peace Bid with Arafat," in The New York Times, (February 20, 1986), p. A4.

When the break in Jordanian-PLO relations, King Hussein unsuccessfully attempted to muster Palestinian support for Jordanian representation. Despite economic dependence on Jordan, Palestinian loyalties lay with Arafat. "The majority of younger Palestinians support the PLO and suspect King Hussein of trying to destroy Mr. Arafat, the only symbol of self-determination and national rights they have ever known."<sup>10</sup> This last ditch effort proved to Hussein and Israel that Jordan could not stand alone in representing the people of the occupied territories. Despite the view by many Palestinians that a joint PLO-Jordanian effort was the only solution and the disappointment expressed at the failure of the joint pact, their support for the PLO was unshaken. Even after such a showing of loyalty, Israel continued to "wear blinders" in refusing to purge the Jordanian option from its politics.

In 1988, King Hussein formally renounced any claims to the West Bank or the right to represent it. He also announced the end of his assistance in administering the West Bank, paying salaries of West Bank public employees and allowing West Bankers to sit on the Jordanian Parliament. Hussein's decision sent shock waves through the Israeli government who had relied on Jordan for so long without consideration for contingency planning on an alternative peace partner. "Despite the clear demise of Jordan's influence on the West Bank, the Israeli Labor party mortgaged its future almost entirely to the Jordanian option, in its desperate attempt to find an interlocutor - any interlocutor - to take over the management of the West Bank."<sup>11</sup> Even though the Jordanian option had been slipping away during the 1970's and 80's, with Hussein's hands becoming increasingly tied by his

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<sup>10</sup>Judith Miller, "Palestinians in Occupied Regions Stunned by Hussein-Arafat Break," in The New York Times, (March 3, 1986), p. A3.

<sup>11</sup>Graham E. Fuller, The West Bank of Israel: Point of No Return? (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 1989), p. 26.

lack of legitimacy in the occupied territories, Israel and the Labor party in particular, continued to consider Jordan as the only true representative of the West Bank Palestinians. Israel's tunnel vision on the endorsement of the Jordanian option prevented the development of any new initiatives on peace. Even after Hussein's speech, Israel continued to believe the option still existed. The implications of losing Jordan as a negotiating partner included the possibility of losing the option for Jordan to "take back" the West Bank. The two state solution or outright annexation would be the only alternatives.

The rise of the intifada and its mass outbursts of violence, made the West Bank an uncertain prize. Incorporating such radical elements into Jordan's population would only cause political instability and present a possible challenge to the Jordanian monarchy. King Hussein realized it was time to step aside and give the PLO an opportunity to work out a solution to the conflict. Hussein's withdrawal may have been "...an effort to throw the entire problem into Arafat's lap to let him see if he can do any better by the West Bank Palestinians than Jordan did."<sup>12</sup> Regardless of Hussein's motivations for withdrawal from the peace process, the implications are far reaching. The King's decision removed the Jordanian connection with the West Bank residents, further institutionalizing their sense of self-reliance and separateness as an independent people. The King's move also further legitimized Arafat's position as the leader of the Palestinians. There could now be no question as to who legitimately represented the Palestinian people.

The Israeli-Arab failure to resolve the West Bank problem in the few years immediately following the 1967 war, resulted in missing a prime opportunity for peace. The chance for a peaceful solution in coordination with Jordan slowly ebbed away as Jordanian supporters in the West Bank were replaced by PLO supporters. By the mid

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<sup>12</sup>Fuller, p. 28.

1970's it was difficult to find anyone in the West Bank who supported a return to Jordanian control. Self-determination and an independent Palestinian state became the watchwords of the Palestinian nationalist movement. During this changing era however, both the U.S. and Israel failed to see the decline of Jordan as a viable partner in negotiating peace. An entire generation has past since Jordan controlled the West Bank and few now feel any connection with the East Bank world. As previously mentioned, Jordan's decision to bow out of future negotiations on the West Bank will have many consequences. According to Graham Fuller, one might be the hastening of the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

In the end, Jordan's step in cutting the umbilical cord will probably hasten the creation of an independent West Bank administration and encourage the establishment of further nascent state institutions. But the transition process is likely to be painful and violent.<sup>13</sup>

With the Jordanian option gone, Israel has attempted to find an alternative leadership to the PLO in the territories with whom to make peace. With the conservative Likud party firmly in power however, it is difficult to say how sincere such efforts have been. The continuation of the intifada after almost three years of violence, has created international pressure on Israel to put an end to the uprising and find a final solution to a conflict that has raged for far too long. As the peace process fails to move forward, the political mood of the Palestinians in the territories may be changing for the worse. The people of the territories are growing restless and an increase in settlement activity has fueled suspicions that Israel indeed intends to annex all of Palestine. The PLO's 1988 decision to accept UN resolutions 242 and 338 and renounce terrorism was met with praise and excitement from territory residents. The intifada had ripened the atmosphere for conciliation. Almost two

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<sup>13</sup>Fuller, p. 30.

years later, the establishment of a Palestinian state and the framework for a just and lasting peace are nowhere in sight. Israel still refuses to talk to Arafat and the intifada, with its emotional and financial hardships, continues. While the more radical splinters of the PLO have managed to remain united (not an easy feat), and the PLO still appears to have control over the activities of the intifada, what will happen in the future remains to be seen.

The intifada appears to be a movement that began independent from the PLO and that has created a new internal leadership responsible for coordinating and directing the activities of the uprising. Whether the internal leadership controls the external PLO or vice versa is a subject open for debate. In his book Palestine and Israel: the Uprising and Beyond, David McDowall claims the PLO is more conciliatory than the internal controlling body of the intifada, the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU) and that in fact the UNLU has put constraints on the actions of the PLO. "There were now [after the start of the intifada] clearer limitations to what the PLO could do without provoking open protest from its constituents in the occupied territories."<sup>14</sup> McDowall did not question Palestinian support for the PLO, but rather considered the differences a matter of "style."

In their book, Inside the PLO, Neil Livingstone and David Halevy claim the physical and psychological distances between the internal leaders of the intifada and the PLO has created a gap that may be difficult if not impossible to bridge. The young population in the territories, (70% of the population is under 25 years of age), has no first hand knowledge of the PLO's leadership or of life before the occupation. The difficulty the young leaders of the intifada have in identifying with the shadowy leadership of the PLO, the authors claim, has resulted in a loss of prestige and power for the PLO and in time, may lead to Arafat's total decline. "In the final analysis, the Intifada may have simultaneously breathed

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<sup>14</sup>David McDowall, Palestine and Israel: the Uprising and Beyond, (London, U.K.: I.B. Tauris and Co., 1989), p. 121.

new life into the PLO and accelerated its decline by capitulating a new generation of Palestinians - with different aspirations, experiences, and values - into the forefront of the struggle for Palestinian respect and self-determination."<sup>15</sup>

Understanding the internal leadership of the West Bank and Gaza, the external PLO leadership, and the relationship between the two will provide an insight into the future potential for peace. Knowing the players and their political agenda will help uncover who presently represents the Palestinians of the occupied territories and who is gaining power among the various groups. With the loss of the Jordanian option, it is imperative to understand the Palestinian leadership, both external and internal and their political ideologies in order to understand who will eventually represent the Palestinian people in future peace negotiations. The primary focus of this thesis is to investigate the past leadership of the occupied territories and the new leadership that has emerged to control the intifada, in an effort to determine if the possibility exists for the establishment of an indigenous leadership outside of the PLO and if so, what the political agenda of such a leadership might be.

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<sup>15</sup>David Halevy and Neil C. Livingstone, Inside the PLO, (New York, N.Y.: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1990), p. 292.



## I. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

### A. THE RISE OF PALESTINIAN NATIONALISM

The origins of Palestinian nationalism and when exactly, the movement began, is a subject open for debate. Dr. John Amos draws a connection between Palestinian nationalism and the growth of the Palestinian resistance movement claiming: "...the organizational, ideological, and emotional roots of the resistance antedate the '67 war by anywhere from 20 to 40 years."<sup>16</sup> Author Don Peretz asserts that Palestinian-Arab nationalism emerged by the early 1920's as an offshoot of the greater Arab nationalism movement in response to British control and the rising popularity and strength of Zionism.<sup>17</sup> Dr. W.F. Abboushi, visiting professor at Birzeit University, West Bank, from 1977-79, claims that because Palestine was a purely British creation, few occupants of the mandate territory considered themselves Palestinians. Palestinian nationalism, therefore, did not exist during the mandate period nor did it exist after the U.N. partition plan was enacted in 1948. Abboushi attributes the rise of Palestinian nationalism to the Arab world's inability to restore Arab rights in Palestine by force and a pervasive feeling of rejection by fellow Arabs. "What made the Palestinians opt for a nationalism of their own

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<sup>16</sup>John W. Amos III, Palestinian Resistance: Organization of a Nationalist Movement, (New York, N.Y.: Pergamon Press, 1980), p. 18.

<sup>17</sup>Don Peretz, The West Bank: History, Politics, Society, and Economy, (Boulder, CO.: Westview Press, 1986) p. 41.

was... the feeling that Arab nationalism was not strong enough to deter Arab regimes from mistreating Palestinians."<sup>18</sup>

Many Israelis feel Palestinian nationalism has no legitimacy because it never existed prior to the birth of Zionism.<sup>19</sup> Such an argument however, carries little weight with Palestinians who passionately believe in the existence of a unified people fighting for a common goal; freedom from occupation. Nationalism exists in the beliefs, ideologies and politics of the Palestinian people and cannot therefore be denied by those who fail to comprehend its meaning. However, as Dr. Amos explained, Israel's acceptance of the existence of a Palestinian national identity would affect the legitimacy of Israel's historical claim to Palestine.<sup>20</sup>

### **1. Contributing Factors**

Beginning in the late 19th century, the large influx of Jewish immigrants into Palestine helped fuel nationalistic feelings. Common Zionist phrases such as "the land without people waiting for the people without land," inspired a growing anger against the western imperialism that once again sought to upset the status quo of the Middle East. Despite strong protests from the Arab world, the Balfour declaration set the stage for Arab-Jewish relations for years to come. The end of the British mandate and the establishment of the state of Israel further incited the ire of the local Arab population whose position had been ignored in the decision making process. The end result was the first Arab-Israeli war and the expulsion of thousands of Arabs from their homes and land. The indigenous Arab

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<sup>18</sup>W. F. Abboushi, "Changing Political Attitudes in the West Bank After Camp David," in A Palestinian Agenda for the West Bank, ed. Emile A. Nakhleh, (Washington D.C.: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1980), p. 11.

<sup>19</sup>Kathleen M. Christison, "Myths About Palestinians," in Foreign Policy, (Spring, 1987), p. 110.

<sup>20</sup>Amos, p. 17.

population of Palestine was dispersed into the Jordan controlled West Bank, the Gaza Strip administered under Egyptian tutelage, Lebanon, Jordan, Kuwait and any other Middle Eastern countries that would accept them. Despite the sympathy much of the Arab world expressed for the displaced persons of Palestine (although the sting of losing to the Israelis may have over shadowed such feelings somewhat), they were not readily accepted or welcomed into other countries and were often subjected to discrimination and treated as outsiders. "At best, the Palestinians are everywhere considered emigres, stateless persons, with whom it is possible to sympathize, but most often as one sympathizes with intruders."<sup>21</sup>

Deprived of their land and communal relations and forced to live as the minority population, often among hostile people, the displaced Palestinians lacked political power and social identification. The educated Palestinians were better able to assimilate into other Arab worlds because of their acceptance into the skilled labor market. The peasant and worker classes however, were less fortunate. Often forced to live in refugee camps, where there was little hope of economic or educational advancement, many Palestinians felt socially and politically powerless. The overcrowding and substandard living conditions that symbolized the refugee camp, helped create a rebellious faction of young terrorists. The Palestinian people would never forget where they came from and how they had been driven from their land by a foreign people. The stories were to be passed from generation to generation, becoming more dramatic with each telling. The first settlers of the camps had their memories of the past in Palestine, but their children often only knew life in the refugee camps. Lack of personal experience however, did not prevent the younger generations from missing what they had never known. Understanding the past only

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<sup>21</sup>Eric Rouleau, "The Palestinians Quest," in Foreign Affairs, (January, 1975), p. 268.

energized their fighting spirit and desire to avenge what their parents had been forced to accept. Rosemary Sayigh in her research and interviews with camp Palestinians, expressed the "paradise lost" feelings of the refugees: "...peasant life [was] good, for, in spite of poverty, our land provided us with all our needs."<sup>22</sup> Regardless of how close reality mirrors memory, what existed in the hearts and thoughts of the Palestinians, existed in their own reality and was to be passed on to their youth. The passion of the youth to right the wrong done to their parents, helped fuel the nationalist movement and the growing feelings that the Palestinian people must unite and respond to the injustices of their world.

To rebel against forces that have destroyed the traditional social order to which one has become accustomed, is a natural reaction. To expect a people to collectively forget their roots, deny their heritage, their societal structure and affiliations and start anew is quite unrealistic. The Palestinian people initially put their faith in the Arab world and many joined Arab nationalist political movements and organizations opposing the status quo, in hope that a viable solution could be found for the Palestinian dilemma within the structure of organized political groups. Lack of action and the day to day realities of living in refugee camps quickly soured the impatient Palestinians. "[T]he humiliation of being refugees, economic exploitation, but most of all the absence of concrete signs of progress towards liberation - combined to create a revolutionary readiness among Palestinians in the *ghourba* which only required a spark to set off."<sup>23</sup>

In the 1950's three distinct attitudes towards affiliation with political movements developed among camp Palestinians. The older generation distrusted new political parties and therefore continued to offer their loyalties to old village leaders, or mukthar, despite the

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<sup>22</sup>Rosemary Sayigh, Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries, (London, UK: Zed Press, 1979), p. 10.

<sup>23</sup>Sayigh, p. 148.

fact that quite often, the old leaders were living nowhere near. The second group consisted of the idealistic youths who believed in the power of the opposition movements to change the status quo. They often blindly aligned themselves with dissident organizations who supported the liberation of Palestine, failing to consider the group's primary political agenda or methods of achieving its political goals. As one youth expressed: "We would have joined the Devil's party if it had put Palestine among its aims."<sup>24</sup> The third group was a small minority who did not consider any of the existing groups to have the Palestinian answer. Instead they sought to establish a new Palestinian political movement.<sup>25</sup>

Prior to the '67 war, Nasserism and the cry for Arab unity was an indication to the Palestinian people that salvation was not far away. The formation of the Palestinian Liberation Organization in May of 1964 gave the Palestinians a force of their own with which to identify. The connection was however, quite weak as the majority of the Palestinian people continued to believe the solution to their problem (ie. eventual liberation) existed in a strong and united Arab world. Nasser's charismatic personality and revolutionary rhetoric, inspired the Arab people to believe the destruction of Israel and the return of the Palestinians in diaspora to their land, was a very real possibility. His slogan of "unity, liberation and revenge"<sup>26</sup> created a euphoria verging on hysteria that could not easily be controlled or dampened. The virtual destruction of Egypt's airforce on the ground by a preemptive Israeli attack in 1967, ended the Nasser legacy and almost completely destroyed Palestinian hopes for an Arab solution.

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<sup>24</sup>Sayigh, p. 149.

<sup>25</sup>Three divisions of Palestinian thought adapted from Sayigh, p. 149.

<sup>26</sup>Peretz, p. 40.

The June War in 1967 was the second major upheaval for the Palestinian people and can be identified as a crucial dividing point in the tenor of the Palestinian nationalist movement. The subsequent occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip upset the tenuous balance of the political and social structures of the Palestinian occupants. One author rather dramatically described the havoc wrought by the Six-Day War:

With the June War, all previous modes of life were shattered. The whole social structure was challenged. All previous values and convictions were put to the test...The organization of the society, the values, the ideals were all upset.<sup>27</sup>

The number of refugees after the 1967 war increased as many fled the West Bank and Gaza, refusing to live under Israeli occupation. Other Palestinians were left homeless as Israeli soldiers razed their villages for "strategic" reasons. In a letter to Prime Minister Levi Eshkol and Defense Minister Moshe Dayan, Amos Kenan, an Israeli writer who witnessed the destruction of several villages, provided a detailed account.

Not one of us could understand how Jews could do such a thing...The fields laid waste before our very eyes. And the children straggling along the roads wailing and crying bitter tears will be the fedayeen of the next round in another nineteen years....<sup>28</sup>

Such a statement proved to be more true than the author and his readers probably realized at the time.

In the refugee camps, now even more overcrowded from the large influx of homeless resulting from the war, refugees were seething with anger and ready for revenge. In a late 1960's in his study of the Jalazun Refugee camp near Ramallah in the West Bank, Shimon Shamir found a feeling of social inferiority, due to the lack of land ownership, a

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<sup>27</sup>Mark Heller, "Politics and Social Change in the West Bank Since 1967," in Palestinian Society and Politics, ed. Joel Migdal, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 197.

<sup>28</sup>Rafik Halabi, The West Bank Story, translated from Hebrew by Ina Friedman, (New York, N.Y.: Harcourt Brace Javanovich, Inc., 1982), p. 53-54.

growing identity crisis, fueled by a transformation from an agricultural society to an urbanized work force, and a feeling of detachment from the political world. "Many refugees complained that what they lacked most in their present conditions was *istiqrar* - an untranslatable Arabic term that denotes a settled position and a state of stability, security, and peace of mind."<sup>29</sup>

The sense of "uprooting" from a more traditional agrarian society with its accompanying loss of an established social structure, was particularly profound. Many of the community leaders had the economic means to relocate to other countries and therefore did not follow their people to the refugee camps. Loss of structure created a loss of identity as all familiar symbols of "home" had vanished. Within the growing Palestinian nationalist movement, the refugees found an identity and a symbol of pride. "For the refugees, particularly the educated, their being is an existential assertion of the Palestinian identity."<sup>30</sup>

The fedayeen and their anti-Israeli activities were an expression of Palestinian dignity and pride. The organization was doing something to retaliate for the pain and suffering inflicted on the Palestinian people. Regardless of personal feelings towards the tactics and political agenda of the fedayeen, most Palestinians identified with the organization and that of al-Fatah in particular, who emerged as a popular, powerful force after the 1967 War and gained further legitimacy in 1969 after taking over the PLO. Arafat's PLO was a grass roots organization capable of representing the Palestinian identity and politics and rousing the nationalistic fervor of the masses. As Rosemary Sayigh stated:

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<sup>29</sup>Shimon Shamir, "West Bank Refugees - Between Camp and Society," in Palestinian Society and Politics, Ed. Joel Migda, (Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 149.

<sup>30</sup>Shamir, p. 156.

"...crystallization of the Palestinians' sense of a 'struggle-identity' would not have been possible without the spark lit by Fateh ...."<sup>31</sup>

In 1970, Hussein's battles with Arafat and the Lebanese treatment of refugees convinced the Palestinians that the Arab world was basically apathetic to their cause.<sup>32</sup> In 1973, after the Yom Kippur war, the perceived Arab victory, despite the lack of any direct benefit to the Palestinian cause, incited a more militant nationalism within the occupied territories. Arafat's establishment of a secret National Front in the occupied territories to provide a future base for an independent regime, demonstrated a bolder position by calling for the existence of an independent Palestinian state.<sup>33</sup>

## **B. THE TRADITIONAL ELITES AND THE PLO**

The villages and rural areas left intact after the Six-Day War, presented quite a different story from that of the refugees. The traditional elites remained in power under the control of Israeli military authorities. After several years however, their traditional roles began to slowly change as a transfer of power from the hands of the elite to the occupying authorities resulted in the eventual decapitation of the Palestinian leadership in the occupied territories. "It soon became obvious that the Israeli military governors rather than the traditional elites were the real repositories of power by virtue of their control over travel, commerce, construction and nearly any other activity for which municipal permission was required." The Israeli military gradually took control of all administrative functions in the occupied territories, including budgetary expenditures.

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<sup>31</sup>Sayigh, p. 147.

<sup>32</sup>Abboushi, p. 11.

<sup>33</sup>Ann Mosely Lesch, Political Perceptions of the Palestinians on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, (Washington, D.C.: The Middle East Institute, 1980), p. 51.



The initial West Bank political response after the war, was to support reunification with Jordan and oppose any suggestion of autonomy or establishment of an independent Palestinian state. Such an independent state would, they feared, be isolated from the Arab world and dependent on Israel. The only way to pressure Palestine was through Jordan.<sup>34</sup> Prime Minister Moshe Dayan chose indirect rule through a civil affairs administration as the best way to achieve stability in the newly acquired region. Plainclothes boarder guards exercised control over the population through a network of informers. The existing Jordanian political apparatus was to continue as the primary guiding force in administering the West Bank and the traditional elites would be the Israeli government's connection with the people of the territories.

The West Bank economic structure, through exposure and interaction, became closely integrated with Israel's economy. This new political reality undermined the political power of the traditional elite as the West Bank residents began to prosper from their employment in Israel. As one author stated: "...the occupation has altered the local political configuration within the West Bank and complicated the dynamics of elite formation."<sup>35</sup> The traditional elites who once controlled the primary resources of jobs and capital in the West Bank lost their power base as the general standard of living improved and the national per capita GNP rose by 71% from 1968 to 1973.<sup>36</sup> Israel further consolidated her power base by controlling utility and water companies. Thus, to a large extent Israel was successful in the initial years of occupation in developing a highly dependent patron-client relationship with the territories that frustrated any attempts to build an independent

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<sup>34</sup>Emile Sahliyeh, In Search of Leadership: West Bank Politics Since 1967, (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1988), p. 24.

<sup>35</sup>Heller, p. 186

<sup>36</sup>Heller, p. 193.

community power structure. Jordan's King Hussein, in his efforts to prevent the development of a West Bank leadership which did not support a return to the monarchy, attempted to frustrate any local political development. His tactics however, became increasingly ineffective as the power of the pro-Jordanian notables waned.

The growing political awareness of West Bank residents brought to the fore the inequality of Jordan's treatment of the two banks, further discrediting the position of the notables. State political and economic favors were given to the "narrow privileged stratum" while the peasants were exploited by local businessmen and landowners. The open Israeli job market created a greater middle class that no longer needed the services of the notables to survive and who became acutely aware of the abuses and inequalities inherent in the old order. "Thus, evolving political-national consciousness coincided with socioeconomic change to undermine the status of the traditional elite."<sup>37</sup>

The position of the notables under the Jordanian rule was diluted under Israeli rule by a government who refused to give the elites an opportunity to negotiate for the fate of the West Bank. By denying the elites their traditional role as a link between the people and the government, Israel further contributed to their loss of power in the territories. Attempts to organize a territorial-wide political structure were continually foiled by both the Israeli and Jordanian governments who both realized the potential dangers of the formation of a cohesive, political body. The mayors of the towns and villages were to be the only formal, organized political link between the people and the occupying government. "Only the mayors retained a formal role, and that was restricted to specifically administrative matters, of instrumental importance only to their towns and surrounding villages."<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>Heller, p. 200.

<sup>38</sup>Heller, p. 201.

In 1972, Israel called the first municipal elections in the West Bank since the beginning of the occupation. The contest was between the old established pro-Jordanian elites and a younger "non-establishment" group favoring varying degrees of separatism.<sup>39</sup> The elections were denounced by the Jordanian government who considered holding elections under Israeli military rule to give recognition and legitimization to that rule. The possibility also existed that the election of new political leaders might negatively effect Jordanian influence. In an attempt to retain support in the territories, King Hussein announced a peace plan that called for the establishment of a joint Palestinian-Jordanian federation with both joint and autonomous governments and parliaments to include Jordan as one half of the United Arab Kingdom and the West Bank and Gaza Strip as the other.<sup>40</sup> Criticism from both Arab and Palestinian leaders that Hussein was acting unilaterally helped the King's plan to its quick demise. The plan was however, considered by some West Bank leaders to merit consideration, and did influence their decision not to "...cooperate too closely with the Israeli-sponsored election."<sup>41</sup>

The PLO also opposed the elections for similar reasons as Jordan. PLO leaders considered the elections a sign of cooperation between the local population and the military government. Agreeing to the elections would be indicative of an acceptance of the occupation. The PLO also considered the elections the first step in Israel's attempt to integrate West Bank local politics into the military government with the end result being a loss of power and prestige for the PLO in the territories. As Sasson Levi, a former Colonel

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<sup>39</sup>Peter Grose, "King's Expected Move Confuses West Bank as Local Vote Nears," in The New York Times, (March 15, 1972), p. 6.

<sup>40</sup>"Hussein Reported Proposing State for Palestinians," in The New York Times, (March 15, 1972), p. 1.

<sup>41</sup>Peter Grose, "West Bank Vote Seems Imperiled," in The New York Times, (March 22, 1972), p. 8.

in the Israeli Defense Force, stated: "...the holding of elections was the beginning of a political process whereby a local leadership would develop under the military government, either supported or encouraged by it, which would in time undermine the status of the PLO and its leaders...."<sup>42</sup> The PLO's greatest fear was the formation of a moderate legitimate local leadership that opposed PLO policy and was willing to negotiate with Israel.

Despite assassination threats from Palestinian guerrilla, fedayeen broadcasts of death threats to candidates and pressures from Jordan who declared the elections "illegal," 14,000 West Bank residents or 84% of the electorate voted on March 28, 1972. Such a large turnout was indicative of Jordan's loss of control over the activities of the West Bankers and the yet to blossom power of the PLO. In the end, there was no significant change in the West Bank leadership.

All the trends indicated that the traditional leaders in most of the communities would be returned to office, disappointing supporters of Palestinian self-government who had hoped that a more adventurous and dynamic West Bank leadership might emerge.<sup>43</sup>

Among the newly elected leaders however, five were opposed to King Hussein and committed to the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.<sup>44</sup> Although no pro-fatah guerrilla's were elected to positions (an indication, Israel claimed, of Al-Fatah's lack of influence and power in the territories), the election of five leaders supporting an independent state demonstrated a victory for the nationalists and a loss for the Hashemites.

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<sup>42</sup>Sasson Levi, "Local Government in the Administered Territories," in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza: Views on the Present and Future, ed. Daniel J. Elazar, (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1982), p. 116.

<sup>43</sup>Peter Grose, "14,000 on West Bank Vote Amid Threats," in The New York Times, (March 29, 1972), p. 3.

<sup>44</sup>"West Bank Elects Five Leaders Who Favor an Independent State," in The New York Times, (March 30, 1972), p. 6.

The unheeded protests and threats of the Jordanian and guerrilla camps, based on their professed view of the elections as a method of furthering Israeli control, were not totally unfounded. The image of the new mayors as puppets of the Israeli establishment was confirmed when a senior Israeli officer stated: "Any mayor who doesn't cooperate with the occupation government will quickly find himself in Amman."<sup>45</sup>

Jordan's loss of political influence in the territories intensified in the mid-1970's as the nationalist viewpoint increasingly won out. The popularity of the PLO was also on the rise as the primary representative of nationalist sentiments. Thoughts of returning to Jordan and seeking an Arab solution to the Palestinian problem were replaced with majority support for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

The reasons for such a change of heart are many. Jordan's failure to actively participate in the 1973 war resulted in a loss of its "...moral claim to restore its sovereignty over the West Bank and to speak in the name of the Palestinian people."<sup>46</sup> The 1974 Arab Summit in Rabat proclaiming the PLO as the "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people," was a further blow to Jordanian influence in the territories and marked a turning point in the PLO's position in both the Arab and international worlds. Yasir Arafat's organization now had legitimacy. The ascendancy of the PLO to a position of leading political activist for the Palestinian cause, was further cemented by the growing popularity of the Palestinian National Front (PNF) in the territories.

Prior to the Rabat conference, an independent political elite attempted to emerge within the occupied territories. The PNF was considered by the new elite to be a "...politically modernizing organ that would fill the vacuum left by the erosion of the pro-Jordanian

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<sup>45</sup>"West Bank Elects Five Leaders ...," p. 6.

<sup>46</sup>Sahliyah, p. 44.

leaders' influence and political weight."<sup>47</sup> A coalition of political groups, including members of the Ba'th party, the Communist Party, Fatah, and the Democratic and Popular Fronts, the PNF adopted a manifesto which advocated safeguarding Palestinian rights, rejected the Allon Plan and any federation with Jordan, and called for the unity of the Palestinian people in their struggle against occupation.<sup>48</sup> Although the Front was originally established in concert with the PLO, the Palestinian leaders represented in the front called for Arafat to moderate his position. Extremism, they warned, would only serve to alienate the international community and perpetuate Israel's occupation. PNF leaders supported a pan-Arab solution and urged the PLO to coordinate its activities with Egypt and Syria. The more moderate position of the PNF could probably be accounted for by the harsh realities of living under military occupation on a daily basis, while the PLO leader lived in exile.

Despite the PNF's close association with West Bank residents, the PLO, suspicious of any challenges to its leadership, attempted to constrain the PNF's policy-making powers. The PLO "...came to view the PNF as no more than an organ in the occupied territories for implementing the resolutions and directives of the PLO's political councils."<sup>49</sup> Arafat did not want a local leadership to emerge and after 1974, the PLO actively engaged in indoctrinating West Bank residents in PLO political attitudes to diminish the possibility of the emergence of an independent leadership.

Despite the more moderate policies of the PNF and the widespread popularity and political legitimacy they enjoyed in the territories, Israel strongly opposed the front, labeling them as radicals who threatened security and order. As calls for an independent

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<sup>47</sup>Sahliyah, p. 51.

<sup>48</sup>Lesch, p. 54.

<sup>49</sup>Sahliyah, p. 59.

Palestinian nation began to increase in frequency, Israel responded by arresting and often deporting protestors and political leaders. Such a reaction incited more belligerent behavior and thus began the never ending cycle of escalating actions and reactions. Deportations also served to strengthen the PLO-West Bank ties as many deportees chose to join the PLO in exile and were co-opted into the executive committee.

Attempting to crush the PNF, over 150 political activists were arrested and more than 300 detained in the Spring/Summer of 1974. Such repressive acts however, did not inspire the civil obedience Israel had hoped for. "The crackdown on the PNF had apparently served to widen its appeal, as nationalist fervor spread in the occupied territories."<sup>50</sup> The Front was eventually destroyed by Israeli authorities in 1977 after restrictions weakened its leadership and political activity diminished in the territories. The Front did however, succeed in adding vigor to the nationalist movement. The presence in the territories of an organized leadership representing the ideology of the movement, provided inspiration for the revolutionary tendencies of the masses. Thus, a potential moderating force in the leadership of the Palestinians was forced out of existence with the more radical groups prepared to act as replacements.

The 1976 elections in the West Bank saw the rise of a younger, more radical political elite that professed their support for the formation of an independent Palestinian state. Author David McDowall considered the election results a victory for the PLO but not necessarily a defeat for Jordan or the traditional elites. The new mayors, according to McDowall, were "[y]oung scions of old notable families of the towns they now represented, persuaded by their families to stand for election in order to maintain the family interest."<sup>51</sup> Despite the election of sons from notable families, the '76 elections represented

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<sup>50</sup>Lesch, p. 58.

<sup>51</sup>McDowall, p. 100.

a water shed in West Bank politics. McDowall's assertions seem incorrect as the old pro-Jordanian elites appear to have lost their legitimate power base with 143 of the 191 contested seats won by newcomers, most of whom were running on slates supportive of the PLO.<sup>52</sup> Of the incumbents, those who voiced support for the PLO were easily reelected. The majority of the victors, according to a Washington Post editorial, were "...Palestinian nationalists and Arab radicals who rode to victory on the frustrations accumulated during nine years of Israeli occupation."<sup>53</sup> Such a glaring change in the status quo, did indeed represent a loss for Jordan and the traditional elites. Their primary basis of power, after all, existed within the old Jordanian political structure which was now being controlled by the pro-PLO nationalists. The elections were viewed as a test of popular sentiments in the West Bank. The answer was loud and clear: The PLO represents the Palestinian people.

After the demise of the PNF, the position of the new mayors, freed from party affiliations, was further enhanced. Despite the disappointment the Israeli government felt after the election failed to provide a leadership independent of the PLO, the new mayors were given the freedom to speak openly on various political issues. In 1977, with the Likud coalition coming to power, Israel's outlook towards the occupied territories changed dramatically. They were no longer considered a temporary burden to be exchanged for peace when the time was right, rather they were Judea, Samaria and Gaza, a significant part of "Eretz Israel." The new Prime Minister, Menachem Begin, in his zeal to claim the historic land, expropriated land from Palestinians and intensified Jewish settlements. The new government was in one respect a continuation of the old. Both had avoided making a

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<sup>52</sup>Thomas W. Lippman, "Palestine Militants Win Vote," in The Washington Post, (April 14, 1976), p. A1.

<sup>53</sup>"West Bank Politics," editorial in The Washington Post, (April 15, 1976), p. A22.



binding decision on Israel's territorial claims. The difference lies in the reasons for maintaining the status quo. The Labor government emphasized security needs while the Likud appealed to the historic land of Palestine, home of ancient Judaism. The settlement policy of the Likud however, marred the difference as Begin closed the door on the option of repartition. The Begin agenda gave the Israeli people a new sense of direction with respect to the occupied territories. Begin's plan was "...to push toward the maximalist fulfillment of the Zionist dream."<sup>54</sup> The moral issues of controlling half the world's Palestinian population, could now be subordinated to the primary religious issue of keeping Greater Israel for the Jews.

During the Begin prime ministership, the National Guidance Committee (NGC) was formed in the occupied territories, in response to the new Israeli politics and the Camp David Accords. The committee members believed the Accords "...would only legitimize and perpetuate Israel's control over the West Bank and Gaza Strip."<sup>55</sup> Such a view was understandable considering Begin's assertion that he would claim sovereignty over the territories, thus limiting the autonomy agreement in the Accords. Despite the Committee's often outspoken criticism of Israel, Defense Minister Weizman (1977-80) allowed the NGC to operate, encouraging members to become a partner with Israel on autonomy talks. The Committee also criticized the PLO's position when Arafat was considering the autonomy proposal as a possible step to the ultimate solution of the Palestinian problem. The strength of opposition in the territories, manifested through demonstrations, quickly convinced Arafat the only answer to Camp David was no. Disagreements between the NGC and Fatah continued as more radical mayors emerged as leaders. "Fatah now feared that the

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<sup>54</sup>Aaron David Miller, "The Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1967-1987: A Retrospective," in The Middle East Journal, (Summer, 1987), p. 352.

<sup>55</sup>Sahliyeh, p. 75.

NGC and the more radical faction's would wrest leadership of the Palestinian movement in the territories completely from its grasp."<sup>56</sup> Israeli expulsion of Mayor Shak'a in 1979 resulted in a mass resignation of mayors and a loss of control for the committee. Arafat's fear of losing power in the territories to the NGC resulted in an attempt to financially "starve out" the organization by withholding Arab contribution funds maintained by a joint PLO-Jordanian committee. Both the PLO and Jordan had a common interest in controlling the radical nationalist forces that were attempting to take over the West Bank.

By the early 1980's, Moshe Dayan and Ezer Weizman, the moderators within Likud, had resigned, thus ending the "permissive" era in Israeli policy. The new "ironfist" policy outlawed the NGC, ended outside financial assistance to the territories, increased censorship of the Arabic press, banned the circulation of daily newspapers and controlled political dissidence through deportations.<sup>57</sup> In an attempt to establish a counterweight to the nationalist groups and the PLO, Israel introduced the Village Leagues in 1981. The purpose of the Leagues was to establish a network in the less politically active villages, "...aimed at maintaining dependency and destroying the credibility of the nationalist urban leadership."<sup>58</sup> A known extension of the Israeli political arm, the Leagues never gained popular support and were disbanded at the start of the intifada.

The appointment of Menachem Milson as the first civil administrator in the territories also marked a watershed in Israeli policy. Milson, a highly anti-PLO Arab affairs specialist, was responsible for ending the flow of PLO money into the territories and

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<sup>56</sup>McDowall, p. 101.

<sup>57</sup>Sahliyah, p. 85-86.

<sup>58</sup>McDowall, p. 102.

banning the pro-PLO NGC.<sup>59</sup> According to Milson, the PLO was just one more outside actor attempting to influence the residents of the occupied territories.<sup>60</sup> His failed attempts to create a new leadership from the rural conservative politicians proved his assessment incorrect, as loyalty to the PLO was unwavering. He did succeed, however, in removing most pro-PLO leaders from their bureaucratic positions. The most violent reaction of the Likud hard-line stance, was the destruction of the PLO headquarters in Lebanon in 1982. The end result was a feeling within the territories that a solution to their problem could not be found on the "outside." As Faisal al-Husseini, a pro-PLO West Bank activist stated:

Before 1982, people here would sit and wait for liberation from outside. After 1982, they started to ask what they could do to bring it about.<sup>61</sup>

Such a realignment of political thought is evident in the increase in recorded Palestinian "disturbances" which rose from an average of 500 per year prior to 1982 to 4400 in 1982-83.<sup>62</sup>

During the early to mid 1980's, the PLO did lose some popular support in the territories due to the growth of anti-Arafat factions in Syria and a failure to make any progress towards peace. The lack of a formal cohesive political leadership on the West Bank however, kept any real opposition from developing. The alienation many Palestinians felt from their leader in exile is expressed by a businessman in the occupied territories:

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<sup>59</sup>Ahiya Yitzhaki, "Milson's Year on the West Bank," in Middle East Review, (Winter, 1985), p. 37-48.

<sup>60</sup>Helena Cobban, "The PLO and the Intifada," in The Middle East Journal, (Spring, 1990), p. 208.

<sup>61</sup>Cobban, p. 229.

<sup>62</sup>Cobban, p. 96.

...the PLO is not here, nor do they experience this situation on a daily basis. We are here, and we must deal with it. If this will make us leaders, so be it.<sup>63</sup>

Islamic groups such as the Islamic Jihad and the Muslim Brotherhood gained in popularity but were not yet well organized enough to present any challenge to the PLO leadership.

The failure of the Palestinian communities to produce a leadership independent of the PLO can be attributed to the often repressive politics used by the PLO to control any dissension and to undermine the possible emergence of any alternative leadership. The wider blame may however, be placed on Israel who through mass deportations immediately following the '67 war, succeeded in decapitating any emerging leadership. Palestinian specialist, Helena Cobban, blamed the Israeli government for asking too much of the Palestinian politicians while offering nothing in return.<sup>64</sup> The lack of guarantees to pursue investment projects and to protect historical rights to land ownership, left many who, "...as of the late 1960's might still have been prepared to enter a political deal with Israel, ...no alternative but to join the PLO's push for full independence."<sup>65</sup> The outcome of Israel's deportation policy has been the incorporation of the exiled into the command structure of various PLO groups. Most deportees no doubt, left family members behind who, more than likely, were influenced by the political affiliations of their loved ones. Thus, Israel, in providing an immediate solution to a problem, may have helped to complicate any potential long term solution. With the growing momentum of the intifada and the growth in popularity of many new groups, the problem has become even more complex.

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<sup>63</sup>Emile A. Nakhleh, "The West Bank and Gaza: 20 Years Later," in The Middle East Journal, (Spring, 1988), p. 223.

<sup>64</sup>Cobban, p. 226.

<sup>65</sup>Cobban, p. 226.

### C. POLITICS IN GAZA

Perhaps because of the difficulty inherent in attempting to govern a territory with the largest population per square mile of anywhere in the world, Israel has not attempted to hold elections in the Gaza Strip. From 1967 until 1970 the city of Gaza was under direct military rule by the Israeli government who was attempting to strengthen the occupation in the area. An Arab City council was appointed from 1970 until 1972 under pressure from local Palestinians. Serious conflict developed with military authorities over Israel's policy of annexation of land, settlements and population relocations. The military authorities dissolved the city council and appointed a military officer to govern Gaza when the city refused to enact an annexation order of the Shati' refugee camp.<sup>66</sup> In 1975, a second attempt was made to form a city council. The newly appointed mayor attempted to improve conditions in the city and called upon the military government for assistance. Repeated failed attempts to receive any assistance from the military government led the mayor and city council members to tender their resignations. The Israeli government however, convinced the municipal government to remain in power.

Islamic movements have been particularly popular among Gaza residents. The lower education levels and extreme poverty that characterizes the Strip have been a breeding ground for Islamic extremist movements. The Israeli appointed mayor and city council members have little legitimacy among the increasingly radical occupants of the Gaza Strip.

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<sup>66</sup>Emile A. Nakhleh, The West Bank and Gaza, (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1979), p. 16.

## **D. PRELUDE TO THE UPRISING**

### **1. Popular Committees**

The idea of developing the capabilities to survive independent of Israel, is not one that began with the intifada, but rather one that because it did exist in a rudimentary form prior to the intifada, contributed to the success of the uprising. The revival of the trade unions in the late 1970's was one attempt to develop an infrastructure in the territories that existed independent of Israel. The move away from Israeli and even Arab dependency gained momentum in the early 1980's when a group of West Bank physicians realized the inadequacies of the Israeli health care services provided to territory residents and decided to do something about improving matters. The Union of Palestinian Medical Relief Committees (UPMRC) was established in 1982 and resulted in the development of better health care for the Palestinian people. The idea of independent committees began to take shape in other areas of everyday life. The Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee (PARC) was established to improve agricultural productivity in the territories through research and education and to encourage self-sufficiency among residents by encouraging the planting of small gardens. Through the popular movement, self-reliance was promoted under the premise that "[u]ntil Palestinians learnt to rely upon themselves and their own productivity...there could be no hope of liberation."<sup>67</sup>

The leadership of such popular committees was diffused to ensure the continuation of the movement if one or more leaders were to be deported or jailed. "Each committee was aware of the dangers of individual or mass arrest, and contingency plans were made for the automatic replacement of committee members should they be arrested."<sup>68</sup> Such a plan appears to have been largely successful so much so that it has

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<sup>67</sup>McDowall, p. 117.

<sup>68</sup>McDowall, p. 116.

continued to be a primary reason why the intifada continues despite massive arrests by Israeli authorities and repeated claims that the "leaders" of the uprising have been arrested. These early committees also provided the institutional infrastructure required for the intifada to achieve its expressed aim of developing complete independence from Israel. Boycotting Israeli products and limiting employment across the Green Line are just two ways the leaders of the intifada have attempted to achieve such a goal. The following chapters will provide additional information on how successful such methods have been in achieving the goals of the uprising.

## **2. Precipitating Incidents**

Prior to the uprising of 1987, there were several specific precipitating incidents. The hang glider attack on Israeli soldiers by a Palestinian guerrilla and the Israeli truck collusion with a Palestinian van, the loss of top billing for the Palestinian problem at the Amman Arab summit in November of 1987, were important catalysts however, something much deeper existed in the hearts and minds of the Palestinian people. Israel's "iron fist policy", the failure of the PLO to make any significant progress towards the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, the lack of attention given to the Palestinian question at the Arab Summit in Amman in November of 1987, the years of build up frustrations at lacking citizenship and status in their own homeland, and the repression of identity and political ideology, are all factors that combine to produce a powder keg, ready to explode with minimal provocation. "Any occupation, even if relatively mild, any rule of one people by another, no matter how benevolent, will inevitably be seen as worse than a dictatorship of one's own kind."<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup>Christison, p. 124.

In 1981, Abu Iyyad, Arafat's right hand man wrote about the Palestinians' need for "a flag and a passport."<sup>70</sup> Such a statement expresses a recurring theme in the quest for Palestinian self-determination. The Palestinian people need a country with which to identify. For it is through this identification as a citizen of a nation that one develops his own sense of identity and self worth and thus develops an understanding of his relative position in the universe. The sense of frustration and alienation the Palestinian people often feel is understandable in light of their lack of a political and national structure with which to identify. As one Palestinian simply stated: "[We] want a normal life: work education, freedom to travel, to study, to be able to die where we belong."<sup>71</sup>

Under military occupation, Palestinians have learned the difference between the laws that govern their everyday life and the laws that govern the lives of the Israeli settlers in the territories. More than 1200 military regulations control the daily lives of Palestinians who are subject to arbitrary arrest, detention and often torture while under detention.

Torture of Arab prisoners is so widespread and systematic that it cannot be dismissed as 'rogue cops' exceeding orders. It appears to be sanctioned as deliberate policy.<sup>72</sup>

Press censorship is widespread in the territories as is control of political parties and expression of dissension. The lack of control and powerlessness Palestinians feel over their every day lives, is exacerbated by an inequitable system of taxation and a lack of input into how funds are expended. Collective punishment is another cause for the growing anger in the Palestinian communities. Demolition of houses is an often used tool by the IDF

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<sup>70</sup>Gidon W. Gottlieb, "Israel and the Palestinians," in Foreign Affairs, (Fall, 1989), p. 123.

<sup>71</sup>Alan Cowell, "For the Palestinians in Diaspora, The Vision Fades but Won't Die," in The New York Times, (March 24, 1989), p. A6.

<sup>72</sup>Gail Pressberg, "The Uprising: Causes and Consequences," in Journal of Palestine Studies, (Spring, 1988), p. 39.



against Palestinians and their families who are thought to have participated in illegal political or terrorist activities. Thus, the entire family is forced to bare the punishment of one family member's possible wrong doing.<sup>73</sup>

While the loss of a home can be devastating in the villages, residents of the refugee camps do not hold the same sentimental attachments to their homes. The refugees consider their real homes to be those of their ancestors not the ghetto like dwellings of the camp. In interviews with residents of the Dheisheh refugee camp, The New York Times presented a picture of lost hope and despair. As one resident explained:

The life of animals is better than the life of refugees. That is why we here in Dheisheh feel the misery of life and despair.<sup>74</sup>

The pervasive feeling is that there is nothing to lose by perpetrating violent acts against Israeli soldiers and settlers for the good of the intifada. Village residents on the other hand, are not as willing to accept the retaliatory acts of the Israeli soldiers. They have more to lose and will not therefore, cross the line that will result in strong collective retaliatory acts against village residents. They do not want to lose their homes. With the existence of such a variance in living conditions it is easy to see why attitudes between the two groups are so different and why the uprising has taken root primarily in the refugee camps where radicalism and terrorism are accepted and nurtured.

To understand the anger and resentment possessing the people of the intifada, one must also understand the youth of the territories as they are the primary stone throwers and instigators of attacks. Although they have no personal knowledge of life before the occupation, they do have a profound understanding of life under Israeli rule. A New York

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<sup>73</sup>Pressberg, p. 40.

<sup>74</sup>Joel Brinkley, "Inside the Intifada," in The New York Times Magazine, (October 29, 1989), p. 38.

Times interview with a young West Bank resident presents a startling picture of life under occupation through the eyes of a child.

When we were growing up...the only Israelis we knew, the only ones we ever saw, were the soldiers. We saw them shoot tear gas, we saw them beat people. And I remember when I was little, when we'd go home from school and put away the books, we'd get out a piece of wood and carve a gun. Then we'd play a game, the Palestinians and the Israelis, with stones and guns. We had no swings. That was our game.<sup>75</sup>

Living under occupation has perhaps made the children of the territories numb to acts of violence. Not unlike the children of the ghetto to whom life has repeatedly been regarded as less than sacred and therefore holds little value as they reach adulthood, the Palestinian children have lived with violence and have learned to hate and not to fear. Their immediate goal is to end the occupation through any available means. Thus, the stage has been set for the growth of an uprising. The people of the territories have reached their limits and can no longer accept their social, political or economic condition. As one Palestinian stated:

It is a miserable life. I admit we are committing suicide, but we cannot retreat. Our children want an end to the occupation and they are running the show. What are we going to tell them, we don't want independence? I would be degraded in the eyes of my children if I told them to stop.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup>Joel Brinkley, "The Arab Uprising After Two Years: Voices From Both Sides," in The New York Times, (December 10, 1989), p. 26.

<sup>76</sup>Brinkley, "The Arab Uprising After Two Years...", p.34

### III. THE EXTERNAL LEADERSHIP

Today as chairman of the PLO, Yasir Arafat presides over a factious and unwieldy organization. There is constant tension between various constituent elements of the PLO and often intense competition for both resources and the hearts and minds of the Palestinian masses.<sup>77</sup>

Such a statement aptly describes the precarious position that Yasir Arafat has come to accept as the chief executive of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) since 1969. As the leader of the PLO, Arafat has attempted to balance the radical and moderate forces of the various groups comprising the PLO and in doing so has often found himself paralyzed with indecision. The Palestinian National Council (PNC), or parliament of the PLO, contains the workings of a democratic political organization and is the primary force controlling Arafat's actions. Although Arafat is limited in his actions by the PNC, he often expresses political policy without the blessing of the council. Without the support of the Palestinian people, such actions would quickly extinguish Arafat's political career. As leader of the PLO, Arafat's diplomatic ability and powers of persuasion are his most powerful tools.

For many years considered a terrorist organization, Arafat has worked long and hard to change his image from terrorist to peace maker much as Gorbachev has transformed the Soviet international image. The many factions representing Palestinian nationalism however, often act independent and contrary to the stated political objectives of the PLO. Such independent groups are usually negatively associated with the PLO when one has claimed responsibility for a terrorist act. Convincing the world and the west in particular,

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<sup>77</sup>Livingstone and Halevy, p. 87.

that the PLO is a peace loving organization that only wants a homeland for its poor oppressed people, is a difficult task indeed.

The rise of the intifada has created a new political reality that has had a profound effect on Arafat and the factions of the PLO. All indications are that the uprising began internally and has since its beginnings (although it is not clear when), developed its own internal leadership. This new leadership is, by all indications, loyal to the PLO, but it is also a force to be reckoned with. Since the intifada, the PLO can no longer set policy without considering the political heartbeat of the Palestinians of the territories. What author Cheryl Rubenberg stated several years ago is even more true today.

The PLO could not survive without the support of the Palestinian people. It is that support which gives the organization its legitimacy.<sup>78</sup>

The political accommodations recently made by Arafat and the PLO, according to Mohammad Hallaj, editor of Palestinian Perspective, support changing political attitudes within the territories.<sup>79</sup> Thus, despite criticism from leaders of various PLO factions, Arafat's accommodationist position has gained legitimacy through the support of the Palestinians of the occupied territories who must suffer the consequences of occupation and have come to understand the failure of a hard-line, inflexible political stance.

The development and continuation of the uprising as an internal movement with its own leadership has created a new sense of pride among the people of the territories. If the PLO is to retain its legitimacy as the symbol and leader of the Palestinian people, it must follow and lead at the same time. The effect of such a relationship has been to unify elements of the PLO behind a common cause; the continuation of the struggle until the

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<sup>78</sup> Cheryl Rubenberg, The Palestine Liberation Organization: Its Institutional Infrastructure, (Belmont, MA: The Institute of Arab Studies, 1983), p. 14.

<sup>79</sup> Author's interview on September 24, 1990.

liberation of the people and their land. Mr. Hallaj, referred to the new relationship of factions to Arafat as "loyal opposition" with PLO groups accepting Arafat's leadership despite any disagreement they may have with his political agenda. Such a policy he claimed, accounts for the control of fractionalization and limited dissidence among various groups.

Although there is little doubt the Palestinians support the political program and symbol of the PLO as the representative of the nationalist movement, there is growing speculation that the actual leadership of the PLO may be losing its legitimacy among the young local leaders of the intifada. Over time Arafat has perhaps become more of a symbol of Palestinian nationalism than an effective leader/negotiator of the Palestinian cause. An analysis of Arafat and the PLO's control over the activities of the intifada is required to determine how much power the organization and its leader actually wield within the territories and if they do indeed represent the Palestinian people beyond symbolism.

In this chapter I will consider the PLO mainstream organizations and PLO affiliate factions and what part each has played in the control of the intifada and what possible effects the intifada has had on the power positions of each group.

#### **A. ARAFAT AND THE PLO MAINSTREAM**

Along with Arafat's own Fatah organization, the PLO includes several factions that are considered loyal to Arafat but whose leaders often express positions in direct conflict with those of Arafat. The Popular Front the the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) are considered Marxist-oriented and maintain a limited degree of political and financial autonomy. As the leftist front, the two groups have consistently opposed the acceptance of UN resolution 242. The two groups have also objected to any joint Palestinian-Jordanian delegation to peace talks, citing the dilution of PLO representative authority as their reason. After the PLO split of 1983,

the two groups left the fold only to return in 1987 with a somewhat lowered position within the PLO. Despite past disagreements with Arafat's politics, the two organizations supported the PNC political program accepting resolutions 242 and 338 as a basis for negotiations in 1988.<sup>80</sup> The Palestinian Communist Party is a third organization with some prominence within the PLO, and is represented in the internal Unified National Leadership of the Uprising. However, because of its limited expression of political ideology, it will be omitted from this paper.

### **1. Fatah and Arafat**

Although Arafat is the leader of the PLO, he continues to be most closely identified with the faction he fathered in the early 1950's. Controlling a majority of the seats in the PNC, Fatah has dominated the PLO since its first public appearance in 1965. Fatah has remained in the forefront of the Palestinian nationalist movement primarily due to "...its clear autonomy from Arab governments and single-minded pursuit of independent decision-making, and its action-oriented approach, reflected in its pre-eminence in conducting military operations against Israel."<sup>81</sup>

In 1983, the PLO's loss of its base of operations in Lebanon after the Israeli attack, fragmented the organizational structure and resulted in a splintering of Fatah. Freed from the constraints of the warring factions, Fatah was able to develop a strong base of support in the occupied territories. Arafat, and his right hand man, Khalil al-Wazir (Abu Jihad), one of the founders of Fatah, were the primary political external PLO political figures in the territories during the 1980's. Al-Wazir was responsible for establishing an underground political network of PLO supporters. As director of Fatah's Occupied

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<sup>80</sup>Yezid Sayigh, "Struggle Within, Struggle Without: The Transformation of PLO Politics Since 1982," in International Affairs, (Spring, 1989), p. 254-255.

<sup>81</sup>Sayigh, p. 235.

Homeland Bureau and later, the PLO representative on the Palestinian-Jordanian Joint Committee, he was able to establish direct contact with prominent political figures in the territories. While living in Amman, al-Wazir established the shabibah or youth movement that was responsible for organizing community based support committees in an attempt to develop independence for Israeli control. These support groups were the precursors to the popular committees that have become the backbone of the intifada. Although initially a primarily civic/quasi-political group, the shabibah were, after the start of the intifada, responsible for conducting large demonstrations and initiating acts of violence against both Israelis and suspected Palestinian informants.<sup>82</sup>

Fatah, therefore played an indirect role in developing the superstructure that helped to maintain the momentum of the intifada once it began. The murder of Khalil Wazir on April 16, 1988 was a blow to the Fatah establishment, but, much to the disappointment of the Israeli Government, did not dampen the spirit of the intifada. In reality, it appeared to have the opposite effect as angry Palestinians sought to avenge the death of their leader. The network of PLO supporters and the independent community organizations established by Wazir in the territories, had apparently become internally self-sufficient by the time of his death and therefore did not require his guidance to continue. Al-Wazir's close personal contact with West Bank Fatah supporters also helped ensure Fatah's continuing prominence as the dominant political force in the territories.

When the uprising began in mid-December of 1987 in the Gaza Strip, by all indications, Arafat was caught by surprise. He did not however, waste any time in realizing the potential political benefits of the uprising and by December 18, 1987, the PLO attempted to set the political agenda of the uprising. Commenting on the "heroic steadfastness" of the people, the Voice of the PLO radio, broadcast the following comment

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<sup>82</sup>Sayigh, p. 257.

on the uprising: "This continuation proves that the iron will of the people to resist and confront occupation cannot soften or retreat until we extract our national inalienable rights, particularly our right to repatriation, self-determination, and an independent state under the leadership of the PLO, the sole, legitimate representative."<sup>83</sup> In an attempt to further emphasize the leadership of the PLO, the broadcaster stated: "It [the uprising] has also affirmed the people's rallying around the PLO and their strong rejection of all suspect calls and projects aimed at dominating people...." Thus, although a particular political goal was probably not a consideration when the masses began the uprising, the PLO provided the inspiration needed to energize the riots into a mass movement with the goal of liberation. Emphasizing the leadership role of the PLO in the broadcasts, Arafat ensured the Palestinians in the occupied territories did not forget to whom they owed their allegiance.

Although there were no clear indications at the onset of the intifada that the PLO had control over events, there were however, obvious attempts to gain influence over the instigators and develop the riots into a mass movement capable of being sustained until political objectives could be achieved. LTCOL Jack Connor, U.S. Army, a U.S. Defense Attache in Israel when the intifada began, saw the uprising as a phenomena of "hysteria" resulting from pent up anger and frustration, rather than an awakening of nationalistic fervor.<sup>84</sup> Arafat's personal assessment of the intifada disagrees with such a position:

What is happening, is not the result of despair, as the Israelis would like to suggest, but an expression of the desire to implement this political platform. In all my speeches last year, and in my daily instruction, I have called the young people of the occupied territories the new generals and the new military chiefs.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup>Baghdad, Voice of the PLO, December 18, 1987, as translated in Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS)-NES, December 21, 1987, p. 5.

<sup>84</sup>Author's interview on September 25, 1990.

<sup>85</sup>Paris, Le Monde, January 16, 1988, as translated in FBIS-NES, January 18, 1988, p. 3.



Arafat, the politician, had designed a political program for the intifada that had been born without one. As the leader of the Palestinian people, Arafat was determined to ensure all were educated on why they initiated the intifada. His statement of flattery to the youth responsible for the uprising appears to be an attempt to ingratiate himself to them and further solidify the position of the PLO as leader of the Palestinian nationalist movement and the intifada. Being a shrewd politician, Arafat was well aware of the intifada's potential for political gain through world media attention. He also realized the need to develop a coordinated, well organized leadership within the territories to ensure the continuation of the uprising's momentum. Arafat must also ensure any new leadership commits its loyalty to the PLO.

Arafat's attempt to take control of the uprising is evident in statements made in late December to the West Bank and Gaza Palestinians and during an interview in London. His first address to the people of the territories on December 18 emphasized the necessity of refraining from the use of weapons.

Blood has triumphed over the sword. Again I say that blood has triumphed over the sword, despite all their attempts to subdue a people, conquer their will, and destroy them.<sup>86</sup>

At the end of his broadcast, Arafat stressed "revolution until victory" in an attempt to inspire the masses to continue the uprising. During an interview two days later, Arafat emphasized the persistent character of the uprising. "Our Palestinian people, through resolve and firm decision, will never give in or relent before they achieve their inalienable national rights, especially their right to live like other people and be free from all kinds of

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<sup>86</sup>Baghdad, Voice of the PLO in Arabic, December 18, 1987, as translated in FBIS-NES, December 23, 1987, p. 3.

tutelage, occupation and coercion..."<sup>87</sup> Thus, it appears that Arafat's goals at the start of the uprising were to ensure its continuation through verbal encouragement and revolutionary rhetoric and to keep the people from escalating the attacks into armed violence. "The Palestinians are aware of the respect and sympathy they are gaining in the clashes between stones and guns and intend to use it."<sup>88</sup> If the Palestinians began using arms to fight the Israelis, the growing international sympathy for the Palestinian cause would be lost, as Israeli armed retaliation would be deemed an appropriate and necessary response.

Although the PLO may have immediately seized the political initiative, it is difficult to say whether Arafat had any direct control over the activities of the intifada. By late January however, he was ready to take credit for the internal organization of the uprising. In an interview with Al-Hawadith Arafat explained the popular committees that have been formed in every village and the uprising fund established to support the people of the intifada. He also alludes to the PLO liaisons with the internal forces.

We have also set up commands in the West Bank and Gaza and they are in constant contact with the emergency committee outside. We, from the top of the pyramid to the base, are determined to back the uprising and perpetuate the uprising, wave after wave.<sup>89</sup>

Providing funds to sustain the uprising and help alleviate the suffering of the people who were asked to observe strike days and refrain from purchasing Israeli made products, was probably a successful method of gaining access to and influence over the internal leaders of

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<sup>87</sup>London, Al-Sharq Al-Awsat in Arabic, December 20, 1987, as translated in FBIS-NES, December 20, 1987, p. 3.

<sup>88</sup>Paris, Le Monde, January 16, 1988, pp. 1.2, as translated in FBIS-NES, January 21, 1988, p. 3.

<sup>89</sup>London, Al-Hawadith in Arabic, January 29, 1988, pp.22-24, as translated in FBIS-NES, January 25, 1988, p. 5.

the uprising. Arafat's claim to have set up "commands" in the West Bank and Gaza may be an indication that the PLO was indeed responsible for setting up the internal control command referred to as the Unified Nations' Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU).

Israeli author Ze'ev Schiff, in a commentary in Ha'aretz on February 7, 1988 claimed the PLO did not yet have control over the local leaders but that "...it [was] only a question of time before it [the PLO] attain[ed] greater coordination among the leaders of the rebellion in the territories."<sup>90</sup> Such a statement recognizes the centrality of the PLO to the Palestinian issue and the connection the Palestinian people feel to their leadership on the outside. But at the same time, it contradicts Arafat's assertions of the close coordination between the two leaderships at the start of the intifada.

By mid-March, Arafat asserted there was a "strong relationship" between the PLO and the base inside the territories. He further claimed the internal leaflets that were being distributed to the people confirmed the support for the "revolutionary leadership." To emphasize the PLO's connection with the Palestinian people, he explained what the PLO means to the Palestinian people; "...identity after attempts have been made to deprive Palestinians of their national identity; dignity after attempts have been made for years to trample on Palestinian dignity; and a future after attempts have been made to deprive the Palestinians of a future."<sup>91</sup> His statement on the military operations and "our" decision not to use weapons appears to be a further attempt to prove the PLO's control over the uprising. Demonstrating his position as leader of the uprising, Arafat presented the phases of the uprising, stating the first and second phases were finished and the third and forth phases of civil disobedience were beginning. When asked what might happen if the

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<sup>90</sup>Tel Aviv, Ha'aretz in Hebrew, February 7, 1988, p.9, as translated in FBIS-NES, February 8, 1988, p. 31.

<sup>91</sup>Cairo, Al-Wafd in Arabic, March 14 1988, p.5, translated in FBIS-NES, March 17, 1988, p. 5.

uprising is not successful in achieving its political goals, Arafat mentioned the possibility of using firearms in the territories.

In December of 1988, Arafat formally renounced terrorism and accepted U.N. resolutions 242 and 338, and explicitly recognized Israel's right to exist within secure and recognized borders. Despite criticism both within the PLO mainstream and from radical factions outside, Arafat was able to make such a bold move which contradicted the PLO's own charter calling for the destruction of Israel and the establishment of a Palestinian state in all of Palestine, because of the widespread support from inside the territories. Had such a statement been made prematurely, Arafat would have been committing political suicide. The time had come however, for moderating forces to take control.

To maintain his position as the symbol of Palestinian nationalism and his organization's position as sole political representative of the Palestinian people, Yasir Arafat has had to listen to the people of the territories and respond to their desires. His political policy must mirror his constituents or support will be lost. As Rashed Khalidi, a Palestinian-American professor from the University of Chicago stated: "The P.L.O. cannot demand anything less than what the Palestinians inside are demanding."<sup>92</sup> By accepting resolutions 242 and 338, the PLO demonstrated their understanding of the Palestinian desires to move the peace process forward. In an interview on November 1, 1988, PLO member al-Hurani echoed the UNLU's call on the PLO leadership to establish a "realistic political program" by adopting resolutions that will "...open horizons before the peace process and the convening of the international conference."<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>92</sup>Youssef M. Ibrahim "A Palestinian Revolution Without the P.L.O.," in The New York Times, (February 14, 1988), p. D1.

<sup>93</sup>Dubay, Al-Bayan in Arabic, November 1 1988, p. 21, as translated in FBIS-NES, November 3, 1988, p. 3.

The U.S. decision to open diplomatic relations with the PLO was a political triumph for Arafat and the Palestinian people who considered the U.S. to be the primary link to Israel and possibly the one force that could propel Israel into negotiating with the PLO. Arafat's agenda on the intifada could only be to continue financial assistance and verbal support. On February 13, 1989 Arafat warned of "...national civil disobedience which would lead to a total paralysis of life in the occupied territories-if the U.S. does not succeed in convincing Israel to accept one of two things: Direct negotiation with the PLO or attending an international conference."<sup>94</sup> Arafat's hard-line rhetoric was undoubtedly an attempt to show the people of the territories he was indeed working for them. The fact that two months after the PLO's declaration, Israeli leaders continued to thumb their noses at the Palestinians and instead institute a new iron-fist policy in the territories, heated tempers and necessitated a strong reaction by the PLO's leader. Once again demonstrating control over the intifada, Arafat warned of calling off the order to refrain from returning fire against the Israelis.

As the intifada continues and the PLO fails to make any progress towards the establishment of a Palestinian state, Arafat's job has been to continue maintaining the PLO's position as leader of the Palestinians. With internal conflict occurring with increasing frequency, Arafat's primary message to the territories has been "unity." On March 9, 1989, he called for: "More organization in all fields of militant action to entrench mass authority...with the weapon of brotherhood, genuineness, and love, which the Palestinian revolution has always sharpened."<sup>95</sup> Several weeks later in a message to the

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<sup>94</sup>Algiers, Voice of Palestine in Arabic, February 13, 1989, as translated in FBIS-NES, February 14, 1989, p. 3.

<sup>95</sup>Sanaa, Voice of Palestine, March 9, 1989, as translated in FBIS-NES, March 14, 1989, p. 5.

territories, he used the words unity, cohesion and organization several times.<sup>96</sup> One day later, in an address to the territories, unity was once again a primary theme. The harsh criticism of Arafat's moderate position by Syrian radicals broadcasting to the territories on Al-Quds clandestine radio was probably one reason for the unity call. The increasing attempts by the Islamic group Hamas to control the movement of the intifada, was another. Internal fractionalization, Arafat knew only too well, would destroy the momentum of the intifada and the great hopes for peace that had come with it. Unity was needed to fight against the common enemy.

Another problem that threatened to divide the internal forces was the killing of Palestinians suspected of being collaborators without proper due process, by young members of the internal leadership network. The killings were getting out of control and the image of the intifada was beginning to tarnish in the media. In June of 1989 Arafat once again sent a call for unity to the territories.

Every party, movement, or group has the right to air its opinions, but within the framework of the national unified action. Nobody has the right to impose himself on any citizen. All citizens are equal. The people are the stronger. They are our protective umbrella. Therefore, I urge you to show further affection, respect, and sound revolutionary ethics...<sup>97</sup>

In September, he called for unity among the ranks, stating: "No revolution can emerge victorious unless supported by its masses, and no militant march can continue without sound revolutionary discipline."<sup>98</sup> Repeating his order to control the killings of fellow

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<sup>96</sup>Baghdad, Voice of the PLO, March 19, 1989, as translated in FBIS-NES, March 21, 1989, p.11.

<sup>97</sup>Sanaa, Voice of Palestine in Arabic, June 8, 1989, as translated in FBIS-NES, June 9, 1989, p. 8.

<sup>98</sup>Kuwait, Al-Ra'y Al'amm, September 11, 1989, p. 16, as translated in FBIS-NES, September 14, 1989, p. 7.

Palestinians suspected of collaborating with the enemy, Arafat used the biblical quote, "Let he who is without sin cast the first stone" as a caution to the perpetrators.

The need to repeatedly emphasize unity in the territories and preach against the killing of fellow Palestinians, demonstrates a lack of PLO control over the activities of the intifada. Arafat himself admitted when referring to the killing of suspected collaborators: "We have experienced, and I say this frankly, some indiscipline."<sup>99</sup> Attempting to lead a people through a "revolution" from several thousand miles away is no easy task. Arafat therefore must provide the financial support and revolutionary inspiration needed to give the internal leadership legitimacy and motivation and to ensure continuing support for the PLO. As the months pass and no resolution is in sight, however, his task will become increasingly difficult. The suspension of U.S. dialogue with the PLO in June of 1990 has dampened the spirits of the West Bank and Gaza occupants who considered the meetings a step towards negotiations with Israel. The minimal progress and low level encounters that characterized the meetings however, had prevented any significant build-up of hope in the territories. As one PLO official explained: "...the Palestinian-U.S. dialogue was stillborn and offered nothing to the Palestinian cause but stalemating the peace efforts."<sup>100</sup>

## **2. The PFLP and George Habash**

The Palestinian Front for the Liberation of Palestine was formed in 1967 by its current leader, Dr. George Habash. The PFLP is headquartered in Damascus and much to Arafat's dislike, maintains close ties with Syria. Although the PFLP is a member of the PLO, it is considered financially independent and often politically independent as well. Habash is considered to be the leader of the "internationalist element" within the PLO

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<sup>99</sup>Cairo, Al-Musawwar in Arabic, January 19, 1990, pp. 14-21, 98, as translated in FBIS-NES, January 25, 1990, p. 2.

<sup>100</sup>Cairo, MENA in Arabic, June 21 1990, as translated in FBIS-NES, June 21, 1990, p. 6.

espousing the overthrow of "reactionary regimes" like Saudi Arabia and Jordan and suggesting they be replaced with 'progressive' regimes. The establishment of a Palestinian state is secondary on his political agenda.<sup>101</sup> In comparison, Arafat is a "nationalist" who considers the establishment of a Palestinian state as the primary goal of the "revolution." Although the nationalist position maintains prominence in Palestinian politics, particularly in the wake of the intifada, Dr. Habash continues to assert the internationalist position. Shortly after the uprising began, Habash declared: "...the Palestinian people will win the battle of freedom only through a cohesion of struggle with the Arab and international struggle."<sup>102</sup> Supporting a pan-Arab solution to the Palestinian dilemma, Habash has called on members of the Arab world to recognize their responsibility and provide support to the uprising.

Dr. Habash believes the PLO leadership is too far removed from the Palestinian people to attempt to control the intifada or to act as interlocutor in the peace process. He has asserted that the internal leadership of the UNLU is the only leadership that holds the right to end the uprising and make a truce with Israel. Any interference from the outside, he claimed, "...would damage the uprising."<sup>103</sup> In a statement contradictory to Arafat, Habash credited the people of the occupied territories with taking the initiative to "settle their accounts" with the enemy. In discussing the role of the PLO in supporting the intifada, Habash declared the basic mission was to transform the PLO "...from a bureaucratic organization into a militant organization that meets our national aspirations and

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<sup>101</sup>Livingstone and Halevy, p. 209.

<sup>102</sup>Paris, Radio Monte Carlo in Arabic, December 21, 1987, as translated in FBIS-NES, December 22, 1987, p. 5.

<sup>103</sup>Kuwait, KUNA in English, February 8, 1988, in FBIS-NES, February 9, 1988, p. 10.



is capable of leading and mobilizing the masses...."<sup>104</sup> Thus, while Arafat has repeatedly attempted to strengthen the PLO's position in the territories, Habash has preferred to give credit and power to the internal leadership while continuing to claim the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the people. Habash's statements on increasing PLO militancy also undermine Arafat's diplomatic attempts to transform the PLO's international image from terrorist organization to legitimate representative of the Palestinian cause.

After the Geneva conference, the PFLP leader criticized Arafat and his recognition of Israel in particular. Denouncing the statements as those of Arafat alone, Habash claimed they were not official PLO policy and therefore were not binding on the PLO.<sup>105</sup> When Arafat professed his readiness to "go to Jerusalem," the PFLP considered the move an indication of Arafat's attachment to the U.S. Comparing the PLO leader's statement to the unilateral action taken by Sadat at Camp David, a PFLP spokesman responded: "The readiness expressed by the PLO Executive Committee chairman to follow Al-Sadat's steps does not only imply capitulationist tendencies, but also indicates how far Arafat is ready to go in his response to Washington's conditions."<sup>106</sup> Such a statement aptly describes the PFLP's position on cooperating with Israeli officials in any regard. Although the PFLP does have some supporters in the territories (the PFLP along with the DFLP, Fatah and possibly Hamas are represented in the UNLU), judging from the positive reactions in the territories to Arafat's Geneva speech, Habash does not represent the majority position.

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<sup>104</sup>Al-Quds Palestinian Arab Radio in Arabic, December 13, 1989, as translated in FBIS-NES, December 18, 1989, p. 6.

<sup>105</sup>Voice of the Mountain in Arabic to Lebanon, December 28, 1988, as translated in FBIS-NES, December 29, 1988, p. 13.

<sup>106</sup>Paris, Radio Monte Carlo in Arabic, March 13, 1989, as translated in FBIS-NES, March 14, 1989, p. 5.

Despite his often bold criticisms of the PLO leader, Habash continues to remain in the PLO mainstream. In an almost hypocritical fashion, Habash has called for "unity" within the PLO ranks. Justifying his position the PFLP leader stated: "...when we speak of the importance of national Palestinian unity, we do not do it for 'Arafat's black eyes, but because of the eyes of the children and youths throwing stones at the enemy, who see 'Arafat as their leader...."<sup>107</sup> In a rare show of support for the PLO leader Dr. Habash endorsed Arafat as the president of the State of Palestine in April of 1989.<sup>108</sup> Thus, Habash admits to the preeminence of Arafat's position in the territories as leader of the Palestinian struggle, but he himself supports Palestinian unity for the sake of the people and the intifada, not because of allegiance to Arafat.

Both inside and out of the territories, the PFLP has continued to promote armed struggle to achieve revolutionary goals.

We can never look upon the stone as an alternative to the rifle. In the same way the rifle has paved the way for the stone, the stone is supposed to pave the way for a new wave of escalated armed struggle.<sup>109</sup>

Such a position has kept support in the territories for the PFLP to a minimum in the past. Arafat's repeated warnings that if the Israeli killings in the territories continue, he will have no choice but to end the ban on using firearms, may give the Habash position legitimacy in the future. The most recent upsurge in violence against Israeli citizens using lethal weapons is one indication the "armed struggle" may have already begun.

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<sup>107</sup>Tel Aviv, Ha'aretz in Hebrew, November 8, 1989, p.11, as translated in FBIS, NES, November 15, 1989, p. 25.

<sup>108</sup>Kuwati, KUNA in English, April 2, 1989, as printed in FBIS-NES, April 3, 1989, p. 3.

<sup>109</sup>Livingstone and Halevy, p. 211.

### 3. The DFLP and Nayif Hawatimah

The Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), like the PFLP is considered a radical left wing of the PLO. Head quartered in Damascus, it branched off of the PFLP in 1969 (by Marxists with close ties to the Soviet Union), but maintains a similar political stance on many issues. Nayif Hawatimah, leader of the DFLP, is a Christian Palestinian born in Jordan and like Habash, was considered a leading member of the Arab nationalist movement. His young followers "...called themselves Marxist Leninists, denounced the Arab regimes as 'petty bourgeois,' advocated the strengthening of the PLO's ties with the Soviet bloc, and in 1969 called for the establishment in Palestine of a 'popular democratic Palestinian state' for Arabs and Jews."<sup>110</sup> Although the Democratic Front's political agenda conflicts with Arafat's two state solution, Hawatimah is less outspoken than Habash and less critical of Arafat, perhaps owing to his reliance on Fatah for funding.

At the start of the uprising, Hawatimah emphasized the connection between the internal and external leaderships, dismissing reports calling the uprising "spontaneous" as an attempt to isolate the Palestinians of the territories from their leaders on the outside.<sup>111</sup> An official of the DFLP explicitly named the PLO as the leader of the uprising. "The course of the uprising clearly proves...it represents an organized movement led by the Joint Palestinian Command in the occupied territories which is controlled by the Palestine Liberation Organization."<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>110</sup>Yonah Alexander and Joshua Sinai, Terrorism: The PLO Connection, (New York, NY: Taylor and Francis, 1989), p. 42.

<sup>111</sup>Kuwait, KUNA in English, January 24, 1988, in FBIS-NES, January 25, 1988, p. 10.

<sup>112</sup>Prague, CTK in English, February 8, 1988, in FBIS-NES, February 10, 1988, p. 3.

Although the DFLP appears to be more rightist than the PFLP, the two organizations issued a joint statement declaring Arafat's acceptance of Israel's existence as contrary to the PNC resolutions calling for the acceptance of UN resolutions 242 and 338. The two leaders asserted: "'Arafat's statements do not conform with the PNC resolutions in Algiers, are not binding on the PLO in any way, and do not represent the PLO's official policy.'" <sup>113</sup> Hawatimah also disagreed with Arafat on his decision to renounce terrorism, dismissing the remark as Arafat's own opinion and not PLO policy. In explaining the PLO to an interviewer, the DFLP leader stated:

The PLO is a coalition of organizations and forces that represent all the segments and opinions of the Palestinian people. Coalitions are governed by a common program. We are committed to that program. Any deviation from the common denominator, any going backward or jumping ahead, is not binding on the national coalitions represented in the PLO. <sup>114</sup>

The DFLP is therefore, not unlike the PFLP in objecting to some of Arafat's positions while calling for unity. The disagreement with Arafat appears to be the unilateral expression of political positions passed off as PLO policy. The two groups are only willing to support Arafat's policies when previously approved in the democratic forum of the PNC.

In a show of unity, Hawatimah supported Arafat in a joint proclamation in April of 1989 that emphasized "...the importance of confronting future political developments jointly to bolster Palestinian unity within the framework of the PLO and its bodies." <sup>115</sup> Several months later, Fatah and the DFLP issued a joint statement calling for "national

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<sup>113</sup>Voice of the Mountain in Arabic to Lebanon, December 28, 1988, as translated in FBIS-NES, December 29, 1988, p. 13.

<sup>114</sup>Beruit, AL-SAFIR in Arabic, March 8, 1989, as translated in FBIS-NES, March 10, 1989, p. 8.

<sup>115</sup>Manama, WAKH in Arabic, April 4, 1989, as translated in FBIS-NES, April 5, 1989, p. 1.

unity in the occupied homeland" and "cohesion of all nationalist forces."<sup>116</sup> The intifada thus appears to have created a conciliatory atmosphere that has fostered unity between Fatah and the DFLP. Unity among the external leadership has been a primary reason behind the continuing momentum of the intifada. Any spilt among the ranks would undoubtedly drain energy from the intifada and result in factions fighting each other rather than the common enemy.

## **B. THE PLO AFFILIATES**

We do not have any problem with different political organizations because of our exercise of democracy, the democracy of the revolution. I am not personally bothered when someone differs with me or opposes me. (Arafat, Mar 14, 1988)<sup>117</sup>

Arafat has always had his enemies, but the recent moderating PLO political initiatives have brought the critical radical factions out in force. The acts of terrorism they continue to commit has created problems for Arafat because of their often close association with the PLO. Arafat's credibility was called into question after his 1988 renunciation of terror, when a Palestinian terrorist group attempted to attack an Israeli beach from the sea. Arafat's failure to explicitly denounce the act resulted in the end of U.S.-PLO diplomatic relations. Thus, although the organizations outside the PLO mainstream do not have any significant following in the territories and are not represented in the UNLU, their existence does impact on Palestinian politics and therefore deserves mention. Since the start of the intifada, several Palestinian radical organizations (primarily based in Damascus), both PLO affiliated and non-affiliated, have criticized Arafat's conciliatory moves. The strongest and most frequently heard attacks have come from a PLO affiliate, the Popular Front for the

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<sup>116</sup>Sanaa, Voice of Palestine in Arabic, July 6, 1989, as translated in FBIS-NES, July 7, 1989, p. 2-3.

<sup>117</sup>Cairo, Al-Wafd in Arabic, March 14, 1988, p.5, as translated in FBIS-NES, March 17, 1988, p. 6.

Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC), led by Ahmed Jibril. A second group, the Palestine Liberation Front (PLF) has also created problems for Arafat and tarnished his new moderate image. For the purpose of this paper, only these two groups will be discussed.

### **1. The PFLP-GC and Ahmed Jibril**

The PFLP-GC is a Syrian and Libyan funded group established in 1968 as an offshoot of Habash's PFLP. Although affiliated with the PLO, Jibril has not attended a PNC meeting since 1983. The GC splintered from Habash because of a difference of opinion in supporting Syria however, both groups carry a similar political philosophy. Both consider the Palestinian dilemma in the greater context of revolution throughout the Arab world with the goal of toppling conservative, pro-western governments.<sup>118</sup> Considered responsible for the PLO split in 1983, Jibril has constantly attempted to challenge Arafat's leadership position and undermine his authority. Personally, Jibril has expressed contempt for Arafat and considers him "...a toady for the conservative oil-rich states that provide so much funding to the PLO."<sup>119</sup>

After the PNC acceptance of UN resolutions 242 and 338, Jibril called for a state of "mourning," echoing the Islamic stance that Palestine cannot be divided. "Palestine is like a single human body; its land cannot be divided."<sup>120</sup> Expressing his anger over Arafat's recognition of the "Zionist entity," Jibril called for a continuation of the armed struggle as the only road to Palestine, asserting: "Arafat and his supporters think they can

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<sup>118</sup>Livingstone and Halevy, p.221.

<sup>119</sup>Livingstone and Halevy, p.222.

<sup>120</sup>Al-Quds Palestinian Arab Radio in Arabic, November 17, 1988, as translated in FBIS-NES, November 18, 1988, p. 4

get to Palestine by making concessions and kneeling to the enemies."<sup>121</sup> In several other broadcasts, Jibril has continued to deride Arafat for what he calls his "policy of submissiveness towards Israel."<sup>122</sup>

The DFLP and PFLP have attempted to bring the rejectionist front back under the PLO umbrella, but Jibril refuses to coordinate or meet with Arafat. Despite the fact that Jibril will undoubtedly continue his Arafat bashing, in actuality, he is little more than a minor annoyance. His organization currently holds little appeal for the occupants of the territories, except perhaps the Islamacists who agree with his position that Palestine cannot be divided. The limited membership of his organization (approx.400-600) prevents him from causing any significant damage to Arafat's popularity. Minor terrorist acts against Israel will probably be his primary menace in the future.

## **2. The Palestine Liberation Front and Abu Abbas**

The Palestine Liberation Front (PLF) was established in 1977 as an off shoot from the PFLP-GC. A pro-Iraqi terrorist organization, its headquarters are based in Baghdad, (with a satellite in Libya until recently) and it receives financing from Iraq, Fatah and the PLO.<sup>123</sup> Abu Abbas, leader of the PLF, came into Arafat's favor in 1982, when he evacuated Beirut with the PLO, followed Arafat to Tunis, and declared his loyalty to the PLO leader. With the fractionalization of other PLO member organizations, Arafat could not afford to be choosy about his friends. To show his appreciation for Abbas' support,

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<sup>121</sup>Al-Quds Palestinian Arab Radio in Arabic, December 11, 1988, as translated in FBIS-NES, December 13, 1988, p. 4-5.

<sup>122</sup>Kuwait, Al-Ra'y Al-Amm in Arabic, September 11, 1989, p. 16, as translated in FBIS-NES, September 14, 1989, p. 7.

<sup>123</sup>Livingstone and Halevy, p.77.

Arafat named Abbas to the PLO Executive Committee, helped him establish the PLF headquarters and provided him with a generous budget of \$100,000 per month.<sup>124</sup>

Although the PLF's leader Abu Abbas is an Arafat loyalist, his acts of terrorism are not necessarily supported by the PLO. The groups' 1985 hijacking of the cruise ship the Achille Lauro, was one incident that damaged the PLO diplomatic image Arafat was trying to create. Although Arafat formally denied any PLO connection with Abbas, his continuing membership in the Executive Committee could not be ignored and was glaring proof to the international community that the PLO was indeed responsible for the Achille Lauro incident. Arafat was forced to admit that Abbas was one of his loyal followers and declared that the PLO " will not abandon Abu Abbas."<sup>125</sup> Arafat's failure to take action against Abu Abbas was cited as the reason for U.S. Secretary of State George Schultz's denial of a visa to address the U.N. General assembly in 1988.<sup>126</sup>

In June of 1990, Abbas once again proved to be Arafat's nemesis, as PLF members were caught attempting a guerrilla attack on Israel from a beach landing. The credibility of Arafat's 1988 decision to renounce terrorism was in peril as was the continuing U.S.-PLO dialogue. U.S. demands that Abbas be expelled from the PLO Executive Committee and that Arafat expressly condemn the act were ignored. The amid strong pressures from internal political organizations and the Israeli government, the U.S.-PLO dialogue was suspended in June of 1990 with Arafat continuing his support of Abbas.

Despite the mutual support between Arafat and Abbas, the PLF president does not follow Arafat's political line. Arafat, realizing the potential damage an armed struggle

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<sup>124</sup>Livingstone and Halevy, p.77.

<sup>125</sup>Livingstone and Halevy, p. 259-260.

<sup>126</sup>Kuwait, Al-Qabas in Arabic, December 8, 1988, p. 19, as translated in FBIS-NES, December 12, 1988, p. 5.



would cause to the intifada, both in terms of casualties and loss of international sympathies for the Palestinian cause, has consistently called for the use of stones against the Israeli forces. Abbas, in contrast, called for the Palestinians to use arms in their "...struggle against the Zionist enemy to create a qualitative leap in the way they confront it."<sup>127</sup> During the 19th PNC when the decision was made to accept UN resolutions 242 and 338, Abbas stated that the PLF agrees "...to the political statement as a whole" but would not support the two resolutions "...inasmuch as they ignore the Palestinian people's cause."<sup>128</sup> Abbas also refused to approve of Israeli's right to exist or to end subversive operations against Israel.

Although Abu Abbas does not have a large following (approx. 200 members), he has caused some problems for the moderate image Arafat has attempted to create for the PLO. Abbas may not speak for the PLO, but his position on the Executive Committee lends credibility to his statements and may be confused as PLO official policy. If the PLO is to be taken seriously as a potential peace negotiator, such radical elements must be controlled. Abbas has proven to be of little value to the PLO and more trouble than he is worth. Although it will take a united force against him, he should be expelled from the PLO if Arafat is to develop legitimacy in the international arena.

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<sup>127</sup>Kuwait, KUNA in English, May 21, 1989, as printed in FBIS-NES, May 22, 1989, p. 9.

<sup>128</sup>Kuwait, Al-Siyasah in Arabic, December 5, 1988, p. 11, as translated in FBIS-NES, December 7, 1988, p. 2.

#### IV. THE INTERNAL LEADERSHIP

While there is little doubt the uprising has created an internal leadership that has taken responsibility for the day to day operations of the intifada, the question remains: Has an independent leadership capable of challenging the legitimacy of the PLO, developed in the territories or does the possibility exist for the development of one in the near future? Salim Tamari, a professor of sociology at Birzeit University in the West Bank, in 1988, saw the intifada as the force responsible for transferring political power from the PLO to the internal movement.<sup>129</sup> Author Emile Sahliyah claimed the uprising has given the Palestinians in the occupied territories a greater political role in the Palestinian nationalist movement and "...shifted the locus of struggle and leadership for the promotion of the Palestinian cause from the exiled PLO to the inhabitants of the occupied territories."<sup>130</sup> While the internal leadership has undeniably become a political force in the Palestinian nationalist movement, the PLO and Yasir Arafat are still considered the symbols of Palestinian national rights. The Palestinian uprising requires the recognized legitimacy of the PLO organ while the PLO needs the support of the masses to maintain its legitimacy. Thus, while the uprising has given greater prestige to the PLO, it has not been without its costs. The PLO can no longer act solely within the political vacuum of the PNC. If Arafat's PLO falls out of touch with the mainstream political movement in the territories, the possibility for a challenge of leadership exists. The PLO's failure to make any progress towards the establishment of a Palestinian state, have already affected the politics of the West Bank and Gaza residents.

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<sup>129</sup>Salim Tamari, "What the Uprising Means," in Middle East Report, (May-June, 1988) p. 27.

<sup>130</sup>Sahliyah, p. 183.

To understand the groups that may challenge Arafat's authority in the future, the internal political forces in the territories must be studied.

It was the initiatives taken by the youth of the territories, not the PLO, that ignited the fire inspiring all age groups to participate in political protest activities against the occupation authorities. And it was the leadership of the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising that created the organization needed to perpetuate the intifada. The Islamic groups have also taken responsibility for inciting the masses, but their influence is concentrated primarily in the refugee camps of the Gaza strip. A third group that must be considered when discussing the internal leadership, are the notables who are often sought out by the media for their perspective on the uprising. These three groups have influence the intifada to a greater or lesser degree. They are the formal political structure of the occupied territories and therefore will each be explored with particular attention given to their relative power position within the territories and their relationships with the PLO.

#### **A. THE UNIFIED NATIONAL LEADERSHIP OF THE UPRISING**

The birth of the Unified National Command of the Uprising brought to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict a breed of leaders that was quite unprecedented. Raised in the shadow of Israel's occupation, they had only vague memories of what life had been like before it. Diplomacy and intercession with the authorities, the hallmarks of their predecessors for the past two decades, were simply not their style.<sup>131</sup>

The Unified National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU - renamed from the Unified National Command of the Uprising), first appeared shortly after the beginning of the uprising. Although not considered a party to the initiation of the uprising, the UNLU can be credited with organizing and directing the civil disobedience that continues to characterize the uprising. On January 19, 1988, the first call for a general strike went out

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<sup>131</sup>Ze'ev Schiff and Ehud Ya'ari, *Intifada the Palestinian Uprising: Israel's Third Front*, (New York, N.Y.: Simon and Schuster, 1990), p. 188.

over Al-Quds Palestinian radio, a Clandestine station believed to be broadcasting from Lebanon possibly under the control of the PFLP-GC. The broadcast praised the people of the uprising, encouraged escalation of anti-Israeli activities and called for a general, comprehensive strike commencing on the day of the broadcast and continuing for four days.<sup>132</sup> One day later the Baghdad Voice of the PLO also praised the uprising and encouraged the people to continue. The broadcast also welcomed members of the Islamic al-Jihad movement into the UNLU.<sup>133</sup> Control over events of the uprising were initially attempted through the distribution a leaflets, a method that later proved to be quite effective in inciting mass civil disobedience. The Jerusalem Television Service considered the distribution of the leaflets to be an attempt to "...paralyze life in the territories completely."<sup>134</sup> Civilian Administrators in the territories also noted the existence of the UNLU and correctly pegged its leaders as PLO supporters.

In late January, a group calling itself the Uprising's Popular Committee in the city of Qalqilyah, broadcast on al-Quds radio the strike rules accompanied by a warning to merchants who do not comply that "...we will strike with a fist of iron...Anyone who repeats such acts [ignoring strike calls] will be met with an immediate response and without previous warning, beginning with the capital until the entire store is set on fire."<sup>135</sup> In early February, al-Quds radio called on the people of the territories to observe calls for

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<sup>132</sup>Al-Quds Palestinian Arab Radio in Arabic, January 19, 1988, as translated in FBIS-NES, January 10, 1988, p. 5.

<sup>133</sup>Baghdad, Voice of the PLO in Arabic, January 20, 1988, as translated in FBIS-NES, January 21, 1988, p. 6-7.

<sup>134</sup>Jerusalem Television Service in Hebrew, January 19, 1988, as translated in FBIS-NES, January 21, 1988, p. 29.

<sup>135</sup>AL-Quds Palestinian Arab Radio in Arabic, January 26, 1988, as translated in FBIS-NES, January 27, 1988, p. 8.

demonstrations and strikes, threatening anyone who failed to comply.<sup>136</sup> Another broadcast on al-Quds radio in mid-February outlined the uprising "program," supposedly approved by all trade unions, professional organizations, unified committees and uprising leaders, but without a given source. The broadcast outlined specific responsibilities of each group of people including the PLO whose job it was to "...avenge the martyrs."<sup>137</sup> In contrast to the Al-Quds station, the Voice of the PLO presented a broadcast in the same time period, under the name of the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising, that emphasized the role of the PLO as the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.<sup>138</sup> It is clear that the PLO had no control over the al-Quds station and was attempting to use its own broadcasts to influence the wave of the intifada and to remind the people of the territories who their legitimate leader was. It thus appears the development of a coordinated leadership responsible for controlling the events of the uprising did not happen immediately at the onset of the uprising.

The UNLU was the leadership that eventually took command of the uprising. This internal leadership organization is composed of representatives of each of several PLO factions including the PFLP, DFLP, Fatah and the Palestinian Communist Party. As in the external PLO, Fatah dominates in the territories and in the UNLU. Although it is unclear exactly who is directing the uprising, the need to know the identity of the leaders may be less important than determining the scope of their control over events of the uprising. Because of the Israeli government's policy of arresting anyone suspected of membership in

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<sup>136</sup>Al-Quds Palestinian Arab Radio in Arabic, February 5, 1988, as translated in FBIS-NES, February 6, 1988, p. 5.

<sup>137</sup>Al-Quds Palestinian Arab Radio in Arabic, February 16, 1988, as translated in FBIS-NES, February 17, 1988, p. 4-5.

<sup>138</sup>Baghdad, Voice of the PLO in Arabic, February 4, 1988, as translated in FBIS-NES, February 5, 1988, p. 3.

the UNLU, and the extensive Israeli intelligence network in the territories, it is highly likely that many previous members of the UNLU have been arrested. The survivability of the UNLU appears to be hinged on its ability to replace leaders as they are arrested. As prominent West Bank resident Hanna Sinyurah noted:

This generation is made up of anonymous leaders who lack substantial identity, coming from the trade unions, the universities, and the municipal sector. If you detain 10 of them another 100 will replace them.<sup>139</sup>

If Sinyurah is correct, there is no one leader or group of leaders needed to sustain the intifada. Without the existence of individual personalities, it is difficult to even consider the UNLU as a leadership challenge to the PLO. The actual "minds" behind the uprising may be nothing more than cogs in a wheel. If the leadership can be so easily replaced, then it stands to reason that the UNLU is controlled by prevailing political conditions and possibly the desires of the PLO. Decapitating such an "assembly line" leadership is therefore impossible, for the "leaders" can readily be replaced by anyone capable of continuing with the political program of the uprising.

Authors Ze'ev Schiff and Ehud Ya'ari have theorized that if the masses knew the identity of those who give the orders of the intifada, support could be lost. The two authors attributed the attempts of UNLU members to remain anonymous even after arrest, to their fears of the potential constituent response if they knew that in reality, they were just average Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza. Knowledge of who the actual leaders were, they assert, might undermine their authority in the territories and put an end to the "blind obedience" to UNLU directives.<sup>140</sup> Such a view considers the legitimacy of the

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<sup>139</sup>Tel Aviv, Yedi-ot Aharonot in Hebrew, January 15, 1988, p. 5, as translated in FBIS-NES, January 21 1988, p. 7.

<sup>140</sup>Schiff and Ya'ari, p. 190.

UNLU to be embodied in the prestige of the individuals rather than in the respect for the organization that has perpetuated the uprising and given a renewed sense of hope and pride to the people of the territories. Universal participation in the intifada appears to stem from the belief that the uprising will be the impetus needed to throw off the occupation and create a Palestinian state. If particular individuals were the controlling force behind the intifada, then their arrest and deportation would mean an end to the uprising. The sustainability of the uprising can therefore be attributed to the ability of the UNLU to replace lost leaders and the commitment of the people who believe in their cause.

The elements that comprise the leadership of the UNLU are perhaps younger and more revolutionary in their rhetoric than the traditional leaders of West Bank politics, but are no less zealous in the pursuit of their goals. In attempting to characterize the internal leadership, author Don Peretz explains: "...it is assumed to be young, well educated, not tied to the traditionalists or notables, and closely linked to the extensive social communication networks existing among Palestinians."<sup>141</sup> This new generation of leaders is more determined to end the occupation and more willing to sacrifice what ever it takes to achieve this goal. They do not fear the Israeli soldiers, but rather defy their authority and dare them to react. As Hana Sinyurah, a prominent West Bank resident stated:

Our generation was afraid to speak out. I was afraid to speak out loudly and clearly. They are not afraid.<sup>142</sup>

Although the PLO is considered the political representative of the Palestinians, the UNLU appears to have its own political agenda. While taking responsibility for directing the day to day activities of the intifada, the National Leadership has also injected politics

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<sup>141</sup>Don Peretz, "Intifadeh: The Palestinian Uprising," in Foreign Affairs, (Summer, 1988), p. 969.

<sup>142</sup>Tel Aviv, Yedi-ot Aharonot, January 15, 1988, p. 5, as translated in FBIS-NES, January 21, 1988, p. 32.

into its radio broadcasts in the territories. In July of 1988 when King Hussein decided to sever his contacts with the West Bank, the UNLU praised the decision as "...one of the most important achievements of the uprising."<sup>143</sup> In October of the same year, prior to Arafat's address to the UN, the National Leadership called on the PNC to adopt an "...explicit political program that will endorse the establishment of a just peace that will not be achieved unless a Palestinian state is established."<sup>144</sup> The PNC's decision to accept UN resolutions 242 and 338, reflects the significant political influence of the UNLU. Arafat's declaration of an independent Palestinian state by the PNC in November of 1988, was met with high praise from the UNLU. Arafat's move was an obvious attempt to assert his authority over the territories and to institutionalize his legitimacy as president of a Palestinian state, however, such a bold political move could not have been made without the support of the UNLU. Thus, although the National Leadership does appear to have a political agenda, it is not one that contradicts the PLO. The UNLU however, has not been timid about expressing its desires. In May of 1989, the UNLU's reference to itself as "the struggle arm and political extension of the PLO in the State of Palestine,"<sup>145</sup> clearly expressed an involvement in the politics of the Palestinian cause.

Although the PLO approves the leaflets the UNLU distributes in the territories directing the activities of the intifada, the internal leadership's statements do not always parallel those of the PLO. One example was the leadership's declaration that "...not a single national Palestinian should be meeting with anyone in the Israeli government," when

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<sup>143</sup>Baghdad, Voice of the PLO in Arabic, September 5, 1988, as translated in FBIS-NES, September 6, 1988, p. 5.

<sup>144</sup>Paris, Radio Monte Carlo in Arabic, October 30, 1988, as translated in FBIS-NES, November 2, 1988, p. 18.

<sup>145</sup>Sanaa, Voice of Palestine in Arabic, May 23, 1989, as translated in FBIS-NES, May 24, 1989, p. 15.



Arafat had already approved of such meetings.<sup>146</sup> The geographical distance between the two and the limited communications, complicated by Israeli censorship and control, may account for the discrepancies. Having two leadership organizations involved in declaring political positions, further complicates the relationship. If the PLO finds itself no longer able, for whatever reason, to represent the expressed desires of the internal leadership, then the result may mean an end to the the PLO's legitimacy. For now however, the uprising appears to have strengthened the relationship between the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories and the external PLO.

The objectives of the UNLU have primarily been to incite the people, through revolutionary rhetoric and calls to civil disobedience and violent action, to sustain the uprising until political goals are achieved. Leaflets containing calls for general strikes, escalation of violent activities, and non-payment of taxes, have been the primary method of control over the intifada. The UNLU coordinates individual neighborhood activities through informal branches in refugee districts, villages and city neighborhoods. Local leaders tend to reflect the predominant political affiliations of their particular areas. For example, the Islamic Jihad is represented in Gaza and in Nablus, the village "higher committee" consists primarily of local Fatah leadership. While the local leadership is responsible for ensuring the instructions of the UNLU leaflets are carried out, they are often modified to fit local conditions.<sup>147</sup> The al-shabibah youth movement, started by the PLO, and the strike forces have, been the two groups responsible for physically enforcing the general strikes and initiating stone throwing acts against Israeli settlers and soldiers. The often over zealous youths have also been blamed for the killing of suspected

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<sup>146</sup>Joel Brinkley, "Inside the Intifada," in The New York Times Magazine, (October 30, 1989), p. 92.

<sup>147</sup>Joe Stork, "The Significance of Stones: Notes from the Seventh Month," in Middle East Report, (September-October, 1988), p. 7.

collaborators. Despite the fact that the al-shabibah and strike forces are under the control of the UNLU, the daily acts of violence are not directly coordinated with the top internal leadership.

Dr. Mohammad Hallaj, call the shabibah the "backbone support of the intifada."<sup>148</sup> The al-shabibah youth movement, has often been characterized in less flattering ways by Israeli sources. Responsible for maintaining the momentum of the intifada, the youngsters are guided by more seasoned veterans who are often graduates of Israeli's detention centers or the "University of the Intifada," as they have been commonly called. The attacks, according to one source, are usually on selective targets, demonstrating a keen knowledge of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), where and when they are most vulnerable.<sup>149</sup> Since the beginning of the intifada, attacks have decreased somewhat, but selectivity of targets and carefully planned escape routes have increased the effectiveness of the calculated stone throwing and decreased the number of arrests on attackers.

In a rather in-depth series of articles on the intifada in 1989, The New York Times presented a portrait of the uprising and its principle participants. In his article "Inside the Intifada," author Joel Brinkley depicts the attacks of one particular community youth group as calculated and organized against a specific target.<sup>150</sup> With the black and white *khaffiyehs* that have become their symbol, wrapped around their faces, the shabibah, when not engaged in acts of violence, are responsible for spreading the wave of nationalism by unfurling Palestinians flags and painting nationalist slogans on buildings, particularly when the UNLU calls for waving Palestinian flags. According to Brinkley, the

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<sup>148</sup> Author's interview on September 24, 1990.

<sup>149</sup> Tel Aviv, Yedi'ot Aharonot in Hebrew, article by Ron Ben-Yishay, "Intifada at a Crossroads," pp. 6, 7, 18, as translated in FBIS-NES, July 6, 1988, p. 27.

<sup>150</sup> Brinkley, "Inside the Intifada," pp. 36, 38.

shabibah is organized locally within each village and its level of activity depends on the availability of targets. Rural areas isolated from roads travelled by Israeli settlers and soldiers are less likely to have an active shabibah movement than would a large city. Local shabibah, although acting independently, do consult with the leadership contact person active in the nearest large town. Such an organizational structure ensures the continued perpetration of the intifada and enables coordination of activities to some degree.

The popular committees of the uprising have enabled the civil disobedience phase to continue through providing the assistance and support services needed for the residents of the territories to survive the hardships of the intifada. The committees are the skeleton of the uprising and represent an attempt to develop a separate institutional infrastructure that circumvents the established Israeli civil administration. The committees have generated mass involvement of the population in supporting the intifada and have fostered a spirit of community cooperation that has helped ensure the continuation of the struggle. The main committees are: the health committee, responsible for treating demonstration casualties and providing first aid teams for on sight treatment; the food supply committee, primarily aimed at providing food for residents of refugee camps under curfew; the educational committee, organized to ensure the educational needs of students on strike were met; the merchant's committee, initiated to replace the pro-Jordanian Chambers of Commerce; and the striking committee or strike force, responsible for control over daily affairs.<sup>151</sup> Agricultural committees have also been organized to distribute seeds and encourage the cultivation of individual gardens. Self-reliance and independence from the Israeli economy and government have been the goals of the popular committees.

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<sup>151</sup>Tel Aviv, 'Al Hamishmar in Hebrew, May 2, 1988, p.7, as translated in FBIS-NES, May 6, 1988, p. 32-33.

Although the Palestinians understand the reality of reliance on the Israeli economy and the impossibility of complete disengagement from that economy anytime in the near future, the committees have been reasonably successful in developing increased self-sufficiency within the territories and impacting the Israeli economy through organized strikes and boycott of Israeli goods. Israeli control over water supplies and electricity are one reason for the inability of the territories to gain total independence. Another is the large number of Palestinians employed in the Israeli labour market. The figures do however, demonstrate the success of the boycott in developing independence from Israeli made products. Prior to the uprising, Israeli exports to the territories reached the \$850,000 mark per annum, making the territories the second largest importer of Israeli goods. By February of 1989, after a concentrated effort by the popular committees to rid the Palestinian market of all Israeli goods where a substitute was available, the Israeli trade figures showed a drop in the trade surplus of goods and services exported to the West Bank and Gaza of two-thirds compared to the previous year.<sup>152</sup>

The strike forces are, according to one Israeli source, "...groups of thugs who are meant to impose the will of the "popular committees" on the population by force, with the help of firebombs..."<sup>153</sup> Such a characterization demonstrates the lack of restraint the strike forces have shown in their often violent activities. Responsible for enforcing strikes and breaking the network of collaborators, the strike force is the police arm of the popular committees. In one communique to the territories, the popular and national committees warned that the strike forces would "...deal with any violation of the national program of

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<sup>152</sup>Sally Ramsden, "The Roots of Revolution," in The Middle East, (April, 1989) p. 24.

<sup>153</sup>Tel Aviv, Yedi'ot Aharonot in Hebrew, article by Ron Ben-Yishay: "intifada at a Crossroads," July 1, 1988, pp. 6, 7, 18, as translated in FBIS-NES, July 6, 1988, p. 26.

the uprising."<sup>154</sup> An Israeli source considered the strike forces a kind of "national resistance group" that constitutes "...the organizational, operational, and ideological infrastructure of a future popular Palestinian army...."<sup>155</sup> Not unlike the al-shabibah, the strike forces are also responsible for maintaining the "dynamics" of the intifada events.

The strike forces appear to have their own structured leadership hierarchy. The forces are divided up into neighborhood cells which are further subdivided into units each with its own internal command structure.<sup>156</sup> The strike forces are much more militant than the other committees and have a strict disciplinary code for its members who must be at least 15 years old. The strike forces appear to be more organized than the top leadership of the UNLU and have been gaining power through terrorist actions and the killing of collaborators. Despite repeated calls from the PLO and the UNLU to ensure collaborators are given an opportunity to be heard and their guilt or innocence determined by the committees set up for that purpose, the torture and killing of suspected collaborators continues to be a problem. An article in July of 1990 in The Los Angeles Times reported that 230 suspected collaborators or more than one-quarter of the entire number of Palestinian's killed in violence associated with the intifada, were Palestinian's accused of collaborating with the enemy.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>154</sup>Al-Quds Palestinian Arab Radio in Arabic, December 21, 1988, as translated in FBIS-NES, December 22, 1988, p. 8.

<sup>155</sup>Tel Aviv, Ma'ariv in Hebrew, August 25, 1988, p. A3, as translated in FBIS-NES, August 26, 1988, p. 23.

<sup>156</sup>Tel Aviv, Ma'ariv in Hebrew, August 25, 1988, p. A3, as translated in FBIS-NES, August 26, 1988, p. 24.

<sup>157</sup>Daniel Williams, "Palestinian Intifada: Hints of Failure Amid Growing Discontent," in The Los Angeles Times, (July 22, 1990), p. A8.

In August of 1988, Israel formally outlawed the committees and began arresting and often deporting anyone thought to be affiliated with a popular committee.<sup>158</sup> Such an action, however, did not deter the committee members from continuing their work. As one West Bank resident stated:

Almost everyone I know takes part in some aspect of the work carried out through the local committees...They can't put a whole population in prison and anyway,...there's a good chance of ending up on the wrong side of an Israeli gun, baton or jail sooner or later, no matter what we do or don't do....<sup>159</sup>

The UNLU, while it can be considered the primary force in controlling the internal intifada, does not have full control over the individual committees and command structures that coordinate activities in individual villages and cities. The UNLU does however, set the general policy guidelines that direct the activities of the intifada. Because of its unique character with the inclusion of both the left, the right, and the moderate elements, the UNLU provides mass appeal and has therefore gained legitimacy as an organized leadership body. The popular committees, although seemingly loyal to the UNLU, tend to inject flexibility into the UNLU's program, attempting to adapt the UNLU's program to their individual community needs and limitations. The strike forces appear to be the one organization that exists, to a certain degree, outside the control of the UNLU. Although helping to enforce the "rules" of the intifada, the strike forces have, in the past, acted independently. The development of such a militant, organized, underground police structure could, in the near future, create a challenge to both Israeli as well as Palestinian authority.

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<sup>158</sup>"Israel Outlaws Local Panels Behind Arab Uprising," in The New York Times, (August 19, 1988), p. A3.

<sup>159</sup>Ramsden, p. 23.

## B. THE NOTABLES

There are several personalities in the territories who are recognized as spokespersons for the Palestinians in the occupied territories. They are often considered moderates and are used as a source of information by the Israeli government and the international media. The notables can be divided into three categories: pro-PLO, pro-Jordan, and those who support both the PLO and Jordan.<sup>160</sup> Since Jordan severed links with the West Bank in July of 1988, the pro-Jordan and even the split camp has lost popularity and legitimacy in representing the views of the Palestinian people. The primary role of the notables has been to "...meet with foreign officials and visiting dignitaries, to convey to them the 'position of the Palestinians' regarding a political settlement."<sup>161</sup> The PLO however, has recently curtailed the role of the pro-PLO notables in meeting with foreign representatives, possibly in response to Palestinian outcries that only the PLO can represent the Palestinian cause.

One of the most prominent and often interviewed of the pro-PLO notables in the West Bank is Faysal al-Husayni. Since the beginning of the intifada, al-Husayni has supported the PLO as the legitimate leader of the Palestinians and the uprising and has emphasized the lack of any independent leadership in the territories. Although al-Husayni has often spoken to Israeli officials, it has always been with the approval of the PLO. When questioned in February of 1989 about the possibility of an Israeli attempt to develop an independent leadership through such meetings, al-Husayni replied: "We cannot and will not accept under any circumstances our becoming an alternative to the leadership of the Palestinian people either inside or in the diaspora-that is, the PLO."<sup>162</sup> While al-Husayni claims all

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<sup>160</sup>Ziad Abu -Amr, "Notes on Palestinian Political Leadership," in Middle East Report, (September-October, 1988), p. 24.

<sup>161</sup>Abu-Amr, p. 24.

<sup>162</sup>London, Al-Sharq Al-Awsat in Arabic, February 18, 1989, p.3, as translated in FBIS-NES, February 24, 1989, p. 6.

Palestinians are members of the PLO and he himself has "ties" with the organization, he does not admit to being the PLO's representative, but rather declares himself a representative of the Palestinian position.<sup>163</sup> Such a statement would imply he does indeed represent the PLO, since the PLO represents the Palestinian position.

Although al-Husayni has consistently followed the PLO political line, in January of 1989 he was criticized by the PLO and local Palestinians for endorsing the Israeli plan for elections in the territories. Realizing his error, al-Husayni clarified the statement and brought it into line with PLO policy by adding the elections would only be acceptable after Israeli withdrawal from the territories. The Israeli media attributed the strong PLO criticism to Arafat's fear that al-Husayni's moderate initial position would further Israeli attempts to develop an independent leadership in the territories.<sup>164</sup> Al-Husayni does not have the political legitimacy among the masses to express policy contradictory to that of the PLO. He also lacks the legitimacy to represent the Palestinians in peace negotiations with the Israeli government. Such a position prevents him from wielding any real power in the territories, but his reputation for being a moderate among Palestinians has opened many doors and allowed him access to many different groups who are willing to listen to al-Husayni's "straight talk" of the Palestinian dilemma. In April of 1989, he traveled to the U.S. to speak to several groups about the Palestinian political position, all the while emphasizing the impossibility of developing an independent internal leadership.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>163</sup>Tel Aviv, Dvar in Hebrew, January 5, 1990, pp. 4,5, as translated in FBIS-NES, January 5, 1990, p. 22.

<sup>164</sup>Jerusalem, The Jerusalem Post, January 31, 1989, p.1, as translated in FBIS-NES, January 31, 1989, p. 24.

<sup>165</sup>London, Al-Sharq Al-Awsat in Arabic, April 8, 1989, p. 3, as translated in FBIS-NES, April 18, 1989, p. 7.



Fayiz Abu-Rahmah, a prominent lawyer from Gaza and political notable, also understands the prominence of the PLO as the only legitimate representative of the Palestinian cause.

The PLO has the mandate...it can make concessions without being accused of being a traitor as an ordinary person who does not have the mandate and who may make political concessions on behalf of the Palestinians. So it is beneficial for the peace process to have a party with a full mandate from the (Palestinian) population. And the only one in the Palestinian field is the PLO.<sup>166</sup>

In assessing the UNLU, he considered the leadership as loyal to the PLO and fully connected with the external leadership on political policy.

One of the most outspoken pro-PLO notables in the Occupied Territories is Hanna Sinyurah, editor of Al-Farj Palestinian newspaper. More actively involved in the intifada than other notables, Sinyurah initiated the campaign to boycott Israeli products. His position of prominence among the intifada leaders was demonstrated when he was given a letter from the UNLU containing a list of Palestinian demands to present to UN Under Secretary Marrack Goulding.<sup>167</sup>

Although supportive of the PLO position and declared an "agent of the PLO" by Israeli Defense Minister Rabin, Sinyurah, like al-Husayni, denies being a PLO representative.<sup>168</sup> After the November 1988 PNC decision to accept resolutions 242 and 338, Sinyurah declared the move "...the triumph of the voice of reason and moderation, as well as

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<sup>166</sup>Amman, Jordan Times in English, March 21, 1990, p. 5, as presented in FBIS-NES, March 21, 1990, p. 8.

<sup>167</sup>Tel Aviv, Al Hamishmar in Hebrew, July 21, 1988, p.6, as translated in FBIS-NES, July 22, 1988, p. 30.

<sup>168</sup>Tel Aviv, Yedi-ot Aharonot in Hebrew, January 15, 1988, p. 5, as translated in FBIS-NES, January 21, 1988, p. 32.

democracy and a forceful drive to build up momentum for a peace process in the next few months."<sup>169</sup>

The power of each of these pro-PLO leaders exists in the support they receive from the PLO. As one author stated: "They have not come to their position through expression of popular will...."<sup>170</sup> The PLO undoubtedly approved of the 1988 meetings between Sinyurah and Rahmah and U.S. Secretary of State, George Schultz. These notables do appear to represent the views of the PLO, but refuse to be directly affiliated with Arafat. Perhaps too close of an affiliation with Arafat would mean the end to their reputation for being moderates and an end to one of the few PLO publicity instruments acceptable to Western ears. The undeniable fact that their legitimacy exists through the continuing support of the PLO, ensures they will not be any significant leadership challenge to the PLO's authority. Their willingness to talk to Israeli authorities has earned them the reputation of being traitors among local Palestinians who consider the PLO their only legitimate representative. Their exclusive identification with Fatah also limits their legitimacy as political figures. Failure to accurately represent each of the primary political forces in the territories further limits their positions as leaders.

### C. THE ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISTS

In 1979, after the Ayatollah's political victory in Iran, Islamic fundamentalism throughout the Middle East began to rise in popularity. The goal of such groups was to establish an Islamic state and an Islamic society based on the principles of the Koran. The growing Islamic fervor, bordering on fanaticism, was a reaction to western control and a

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<sup>169</sup>Jerusalem, Al-Farj, November 21, 1988, p. 16, as translated in FBIS-NES, November 23, 1988, p. 35.

<sup>170</sup>Abu 'Amr, p. 25.

counterforce against western influences. Although not initially a political force in the territories, after 1980, the fundamental Muslims began to take a more active role in confronting Israeli occupation.<sup>171</sup> The success of the Shi'i Muslims in Lebanon in 1982 further fueled political activism among the Islamicists. The loss of PLO prestige after Arafat's expulsion from Lebanon and the subsequent fractionalization of PLO member groups, shattered confidence in the military solution and increased support for the Islamic camp. Despite this growth in popularity, the Islamic movement was not heavily involved in resisting the occupation until the intifada.

Although a point of contention among Palestinian nationalists, the Muslim fundamentalists take credit for initiating the uprising in the Gaza Strip. The two active Islamic groups are the Islamic Jihad and Hamas, an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood established specifically for dealing with the intifada. Ideologically, both groups are opposed to the secular position of the nationalists and have expressly disavowed the PLO's support of the two state solution. Despite repeated attempts by the UNLU and PLO to integrate the leaders of the religious factions into the mainstream leadership, the Islamic groups have chosen to remain independent. Of the two groups, Hamas has the greatest following and is more politically involved in the intifada than the Islamic Jihad. Although most sources consider the Islamic movements of minor consequence as a potential leadership force in the territories, their growing popularity warrants a closer look.

### **1. The Islamic Jihad**

The Islamic Jihad movement is an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood and is considered "...the most radical, violent, and innovative of the Islamic organizations."<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>171</sup>Robert Satloff, "Islam in the Palestinian Uprising," in *Orbis*, (Summer 1989), p. 391.

<sup>172</sup>Satloff, p. 393.

The Islamic Jihad gained notoriety after six members escaped from a Gaza Central Prison, killing the commander of the military police in Gaza in August of 1987. Several other Jihad killings of Israeli citizens are considered one cause for the escalation of violent protests that preceded and bled into the uprising.<sup>173</sup> Once the intifada began, the Jihad leaders were extremely active in fueling its continuance. The heavy hand of the Israeli authorities however, quickly decapitated the Jihad's leadership and "...prevented the Jihad from attaining more tangible influence among the masses, despite the clear sympathy that the Jihad Movement had won."<sup>174</sup>

In January of 1989, an identified leader of the Islamic Jihad expressed the goals of the movement in contrast to those of the Muslim Brotherhood:

...we want to free the land only by force. We aspire to change the whole world and in turn convert it to Islam with the help of weapons and to kill all infidels, including the Zionist Jews.<sup>175</sup>

The Islamic Jihad maintains an extreme position, refusing to consider giving up any piece of the homeland and pledging to continue the armed struggle until Islam triumphs and rules over the entire state of Palestine. Demonstrating their sincerity to continue the armed struggle, the Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for a bus attack in July of 1989 where 17 Israelis were killed and 27 wounded. The organizations leaders emphasized their conviction that armed struggle is "the only way to liberate Palestine."<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>173</sup>Dr. Ziyad Abu-'Amru and 'Akko al-Aswar, The Islamic Movement in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in Arabic, July 1989, pp. 1-183, as translated in FBIS-NES, June 14, 1990, p. 52.

<sup>174</sup>Abu-'Amru and al-Aswar, p. 55.

<sup>175</sup>Tel Aviv, HA-ARETZ in Hebrew, January 20, 1988, pp. 2,4, as translated in FBIS-NES, January 26, 1989, p. 8.

<sup>176</sup>Tehran Domestic Service in Persian, July 13, 1989, as translated in FBIS-NES, July 14, 1989, p. 8.

achieve a peaceful solution, asserting the only solution to the Palestinian problem is a holy war. The covenant also forbade anyone to "...yield or concede part or all of it [Palestine]."<sup>180</sup> Although critical of the PLO's secularism, the charter says that Hamas "...considers the PLO to be the closest to the Islamic Resistance Movement and regards it as a father or brother, or a relative or friend."<sup>181</sup> The Islamic movement however, cannot support the PLO until it embraces Islam as the foundation of its political ideology.

Not unlike the Islamic Jihad movement, Hamas also believes the whole of Palestine must be returned to the Palestinians. Hamas leaders oppose the PLO on secular grounds and because "...it is an organization that does not serve God."<sup>182</sup> Hamas also opposes PLO attempts at diplomacy under an international conference and any direct negotiations with the "Zionist enemy." After the PNC decision to accept resolutions 242 and 338, Hamas leaders called the proclamation an "...act of heresy [that] entails the concession of large areas of Palestine soil."<sup>183</sup>

Throughout the uprising, Hamas has remained outside of the mainstream leadership. In contrast to the UNLU's call for an international conference and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, the Brotherhood has called for the establishment of an Islamic state in all of Palestine. In an effort to assert its independence from the larger UNLU leadership, Hamas has issued its own strike calls on days of religious significance. The strikes have been largely ignored in the West Bank but

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<sup>180</sup>John Kifner, "Islamic Fundamentalist Group Splitting Palestinian Uprising," in The New York Times, (September 18, 1988), p. A1.

<sup>181</sup>Abu-'Amru and al-Aswar, p. 40.

<sup>182</sup>Abu-'Amru and al-Aswar, p. 19.

<sup>183</sup>Tel Aviv, Ha'aretz in Hebrew, November 22, 1988, p. 4, as translated in FBIS-NES, November 23, 1988, p. 36.

Although in disagreement with the PLO over its secular approach, Islamic Jihad leaders identify somewhat with Fatah whose leaders share an Islamic background. Although often critical of Fatah, the Jihad will not fight against the forces that fight against the occupation. "The Jihad is anxious not to clash with any other Palestinian force, whether Islamic or secular, and believes that the battlefield is wide enough for all."<sup>177</sup> Despite the Jihad's refusal to join the UNLU, there has been limited operational coordination with Fatah members since the start of the intifada. The PNC resolutions of 1988 however, ended any sign of truce between the two groups as the Islamic Jihad condemned Arafat's declarations.

The arrest and deportation of many Jihad leaders after the start of the intifada has significantly decreased its presence in the territories and therefore, limited its position as a possible threat to the PLO leadership. The continuing aggressive efforts by Israeli intelligence to identify and arrest members of the Jihad have forced the movement underground and thus limited its opportunity for recruitment and expansion in the territories.<sup>178</sup> Its primary future influences may well be those derived from its early effects of rousing political activism among the Palestinian youth.

## **2. Hamas**

Hamas, an acronym for the al-Harakat al-Muqawwama al-Islamiyya or Islamic Resistance Movement, was organized as a political element of the Egyptian originated Muslim Brotherhood for the express purpose of supporting the intifada.<sup>179</sup> In 1988, the new Islamic organization issued a 40 page covenant explaining its political ideology with regard to the Palestinian dilemma. The document rejects outright any PLO efforts to

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<sup>177</sup> Abu-'Amru and al-Aswar, p. 55.

<sup>178</sup> Satloff, p. 395.

<sup>179</sup> Satloff, p. 396.

followed in the more fundamental Gaza Strip. As a result of the strike calls, Fatah leaders have accused Hamas of attempting to divide the people of the territories and have called on the Palestinians to ignore Hamas strike calls which have only furthered the sufferings of the people.<sup>184</sup> Hamas has nonetheless continued the strike calls and has had little trouble maintaining support in the Gaza strip.

In March of this year, Hamas sent a memo to Arafat reaffirming its position on cooperation and coordination among the various Palestinian forces and emphasizing its adherence to the PLO leadership.<sup>185</sup> Less than two week later however, Hamas refused to join the UNLU because of political differences and declared that the PNC resolutions were not binding on Hamas.<sup>186</sup> After an offer to join the PLO's parliament, Hamas demanded 40 percent of the total number of PNC seats as one condition for agreeing to follow the mainstream Palestinian leadership. Hamas leaders also reportedly agreed to join the PNC on a smaller scale if the committee agreed to abandon the PLO peace strategy and the two state proposal.<sup>187</sup> Repeated attempts by the PLO to bring Hamas into the PNC have failed thus far . Although its leaders espouse unity among the factions, they themselves are unwilling to fall in line with the mainstream.

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<sup>184</sup>Paris, Radio Monte Carlo in Arabic, February 3, 1989, as translated in FBIS-NES, February 3, 1989, p. 8.

<sup>185</sup>Dubayy, Al-Bayan in Arabic, March 3, 1990, p. 12, as translated in FBIS-NES, March 5, 1990, p. 2-3.

<sup>186</sup>Jerusalem Television Service in Arabic, March 8, 1990, as translated in FBIS-NES, March 12, 1990, p. 5.

<sup>187</sup>Amman, Jordan Times in Arabic, April 10, 1990, p. 1, as translated in FBIS-NES, April 11, 1990, p. 4.

Despite their growing popularity, in March of 1990, Abul-Rahmah estimated that Hamas represented no more than 15 per cent of the Gaza population.<sup>188</sup> The large number of Palestinians adhering to its called strike days however, indicates a larger following. Hamas' popularity is limited by its inability to support the nationalist movement whose position has been secured by the over 20 years of direct involvement in the Palestinian cause compared to the few years of Hamas' existence as a force in the territories. The support for strike days in the territories, and the Gaza strip in particular, may be more an indication of support and respect for the tenants of Islam than support for the politics of Hamas. One reason for Hamas' lack of support in the territories, is its lost credibility in the territories resulting from the continuing relations of its parent organization with certain Arab regimes and the establishment of leaders and branch organizations in Western countries.<sup>189</sup>

Despite Hamas' minimal influence in the territories, the political failure of the PLO to achieve any significant progress towards obtaining a Palestinian state, may improve Hamas' popularity. The inability of the secular nationalist moderate approach to achieve a peaceful solution will, no doubt, inject the more radical elements with a new sense of purpose. The Islamic solution of jihad or holy war, to reclaim all of Palestine, may appear the best solution after moderation has failed. Before Hamas can become a significant political influence in the territories, however, it will require clearly defined political objectives and the presence of a charismatic leaders which thus far, it has failed to produce. Breaking the secular bonds will not be an easy task, however, the right combination of PLO failure and Islamic organization and leadership may be enough to inspire a significant following to bear arms and take up the jihad. In the short run, however, the Islamic groups

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<sup>188</sup>Amman, Jordan Times in English, March 21, 1990, p. 5, as printed in FBIS-NES, March 21, 1990, p. 8.

<sup>189</sup>Abu-'Amru and al-Aswar, p. 66.



will probably be nothing more than a nuisance as they remain the one force outside of the mainstream internal leadership. Increasing their base of support will fuel dissension among internal leaders and divert energy away from the uprising. A greater following will also result in a greater influence in the peace process and a possible sharing of political authority. As author Robert Satloff stated: "A more immediate fear is that the Islamic trend may grow strong enough to acquire a veto over the emerging political process."<sup>190</sup> Such political power for the Islamicists would ensure the death of moderation.

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<sup>190</sup>Satloff, p. 400.

## V. THE GULF CRISIS AND THE INTIFADA

### A. ARAFAT AND HUSSEIN

Saddam Hussein has long been a financial and political supporter of the Palestinian cause. In February of 1988, the Iraqi government pledged \$13 million in aid to the Palestinians in the territories as a symbol of "...the Iraqi people's solidarity with the fraternal Palestinian people."<sup>191</sup> During the Arab Summit meeting in May of this year, Hussein brought the Palestinian problem to the fore, blaming U.S. support of Israel for the attacks on the Palestinians in the occupied territories. During a meeting of the PLO Executive Committee the following month, Saddam Hussein was praised for his initiative to increase financial support to the intifada, and hailed for "...sisterly Iraq's policy of placing the issue of the Palestinian people and support for their struggle at the top of its priorities."<sup>192</sup>

The known military power of Saddam Hussein's Iraqi forces, coupled with his ability to make chemical weapons and threats to use them against Israel, made him almost a folk hero among Palestinians. After the U.S.-PLO dialogue ended in June, the Palestinians were in need of a partner to assist with their single handed fight against the U.S. supported Israeli aggression. As the intifada continued into its third year, despair prevailed as the establishment of a Palestinian state seemed as far from reality as ever. Saddam Hussein, a longtime friend of the Palestinians and leader of the most powerful Arab nation, brought the Palestinian problem back to the fore and became an overnight hero in the occupied

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<sup>191</sup>Baghdad, INA in Arabic, January 24, 1988, as translated in FBIS-NES, January 25, 1988, p. 8.

<sup>192</sup>Baghdad, Voice of the PLO in Arabic, June 7, 1990, as translated in FBIS-NES, June 8, 1990, p. 12.

territories. In an interview published in Le Nouvel Observateur, Fatah Central Committee member, Aby Iyad explained the phenomena: "The support is due not to geographical proximity or adherence to any principle or ideology, but above all to an identification with watchwords that now express the Palestinians' despair in the absence of a political solution."<sup>193</sup>

The initial PLO response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait was to support Hussein. The inconsistency of supporting the occupation of Kuwait, while simultaneously condemning Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, combined with the strong backlash from Gulf powers however, had Arafat backpedaling to change his image to crisis mediator vice unconditional Hussein supporter. In a statement issued by the PLO following an emergency meeting to discuss the Gulf crisis, the organization's leadership emphasized its mediator role in the crisis:

Throughout the crisis, the PLO has been working in accordance with the principle of preserving the higher Arab interests and solidarity and seeking an honorable solution that preserves the dignity and rights of all. It did not seek a solution in favor of one party at the expense of another, but rather a solution that safeguards the security and safety of Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the Gulf, and the entire Arab region.<sup>194</sup>

Although Arafat has attempted to play go-between in negotiating a settlement, there is no doubt that Hussein's linkage of an Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait with an Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories, has further incited the support of the Palestinian masses and therefore necessitated that Arafat continue his support for Hussein, whether or not a diplomatic solution appears possible. Direct U.S. involvement in the Gulf further

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<sup>193</sup>Paris, Le Nouvel Observateur in French September 27-October 3, 1990, p. 45, as translated in FBIS-NES, November 1, 1990, p. 3.

<sup>194</sup>Sanaa, Voice of Palestine in Arabic, August 20, 1990, as translated in FBIS-NES, August 21, 1990, p. 2.

cemented Palestinian support for Hussein who now represented the monster capable of devouring the imperialist western giant.

In a statement issued by PLO Executive Committee member Juwayd al-Ghusayn, the PLO's position on Iraq's occupation of Kuwait was clarified. "...the support of the PLO for Iraq's pan-Arab and national positions does not absolutely mean supporting Iraq in occupying and annexing Kuwait by force, affirming that this is an illegal measure."<sup>195</sup> Reiterating the PLO's disagreement with the Iraqi move, without directly condemning Iraq, he stated: "Frankly, we support Kuwaiti legitimacy and we stand against any occupation of Kuwait or elsewhere."<sup>196</sup> Such a statement by a virtual unknown in the PLO ranks, demonstrates the difficult position of the PLO. Support for Hussein implies approval of his actions, however, approval of the hostile invasion was more hypocrisy than the PLO could stand. Allowing low level PLO members to proclaim the "real" policy of the PLO might ease criticism by the Gulf states without upsetting Saddam or the Palestinian people who support him. What the PLO is really saying is: "We approve of you as the leader of pan-Arabism and the supporter of the Palestinian cause, Saddam, but we do not approve of your occupation of Kuwait."

In November of 1990, Abu Iyad, Arafat's right hand man, clearly stated the PLO's opposition to the occupation and annexation of Kuwait and explained the reason why the PLO did not condemn Iraq.

No party can presume to perform such a role if it has already condemned the country with which it intends to intercede. The absence of a condemnation is connected with our desire to mediate.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>195</sup>Riyadh, SPA, August 19, 1990, as translated in FBIS-NES, August 20, 1990, p. 2.

<sup>196</sup>Riyadh, SPA, August 19, 1990, p. 3.

<sup>197</sup>Paris, Le Nouvel Observateur in French, September 27-October 3, 1990, p. 45, as translated in FBIS-NES, November 1, 1990, p. 2.

Such a statement provides a plausible reason for the PLO's support of Hussein and is obviously written more for the Western media than the local Palestinians. A problem with the mediator logic arises however, when one realizes Arafat's lack of international legitimacy in playing such a role. Neither the Western powers nor the Gulf states accept Arafat as the peacemaker in the Gulf crisis.

Internal support for Iraq was evident in the UNLU's declaration of support for the PLO stand and their call for the Arab people "...to support fraternal Iraq and to extend all means of material and moral support to it in its confrontation of this aggression."<sup>198</sup> In a broadcast to the Arab countries, the UNLU called on Syria to withdraw its forces from Saudi Arabia and instead direct them against the "Zionist Enemy" and condemned Egypt and Morocco for "...their standing on the side of imperialism and Zionism by sending armies to help U.S. aggressiveness...."<sup>199</sup> The lack of condemnation of Syria probably stems from the fact that the PFLP and DFLP are both based in Damascus. Despite their past allegiance to al-Assad, both leaders have supported the PLO in backing Saddam. The internal leaders of the UNLU want Syria to join in fighting western forces but do not want to alienate al-Assad in the process. The Islamic factions have also united with the PLO in supporting Hussein, the man standing up to the "American devil."<sup>200</sup>

Although the Gulf Crisis may have helped unite Palestinian leadership factions (even Jibril supports the PLO position), Arafat's support for Hussein has not been without its costs. The invasion itself has created a large number of homeless Palestinians who

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<sup>198</sup>Baghdad, Voice of the PLO in Arabic, August 19, 1990, as translated in FBIS-NES, August 21, 1990, p. 4.

<sup>199</sup>Algiers, Voice of Palestine in Arabic, September 18, 1990, as translated in FBIS-NES, September 19, 1990, p. 2.

<sup>200</sup>Daoud Kuttab, "Occupied Palestine: Emotions Take Over," in Middle East International, (August 31, 1990), p. 14.

previously worked in Kuwait and put an end to Kuwait's support of many Palestinian institutions. Although it is difficult to tell whether or not the Gulf states have ended their financial support to the territories (there are conflicting reports on whether or not the Gulf states continue to support the Palestinians in the territories), there is no doubt that Arafat has been ostracized by the Gulf countries. The Jerusalem Post received information from Arab diplomatic sources that officials from Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the UAE, Bahrain and the Kuwaiti government-in-exile have all "...declared the PLO chairman persona non grata."<sup>201</sup> Aside from his relations with Arab countries, Arafat has lost the support of the Peace Camp within Israel that had previously attempted to pressure the Israeli government into negotiating with the PLO. Siding with Saddam has destroyed Arafat's credibility as a moderate. Saddam's threats to use chemical weapons on Israel if attacked is too reminiscent to the Israelis, of the original PLO charter calling for the destruction of Israel.

Support for Iraq has foiled attempts to reestablish the U.S.-PLO dialogue, once considered the best route to a peaceful solution with Israel. Arafat and the PLO thus appear to have taken a step backwards away from conciliation and towards confrontation. Such a position has damaged Arafat's carefully sculptured international image and repair may be impossible. According to Ambassador Robert Neumann, Director of Middle East Studies, Georgetown Center for Strategic and International Studies, Arafat made a "very big mistake" and must turn away from Hussein if the PLO is to recover.<sup>202</sup> Arafat's position would be in jeopardy however, if such a maneuver were undertaken without the support of the Palestinians in the territories.

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<sup>201</sup>Jerusalem, The Jerusalem Post, August 16, 1990, p. 1, as translated in FBIS-NES, August 17, 1990, p. 1.

<sup>202</sup>Author's interview on September 26, 1990.

## B. A NEW PHASE IN THE UPRISING?

On October 8, 1990, 19 Palestinians were killed in a clash that began with Israeli worshipers and ended with armed Israeli policemen. The Palestinian problem that had been greatly overshadowed by the gulf crisis was once again front page news as the killing incited violent protests not unlike those seen at the start of the intifada in 1987. The new inflammation of riotous activities in the territories allowed Arafat, at least for a while, to return to his more comfortable position as leader of the Palestinians.

The response of Palestinians in the territories has been to escalate violence against the Israelis. In a radio broadcast on the day of the killings, the UNLU "...declar[ed] every soldier-settler on the land of Palestine a target that should be liquidated."<sup>203</sup> Unlike previous broadcasts, this one failed to mention the PLO by name, possibly indicating a lack of PLO approval prior to release. Although the PLO has threatened many times to authorize armed violence in the territories, there is no indication that such approval was given. After a West Bank resident killed three Israelis on October 21st however, The New York Times reported that leaflets issued by the PLO and the fundamentalist Muslim leadership called on Arabs "...to seek revenge for the slaying at Al Aksa."<sup>204</sup> Although the leaflet does not explicitly call for armed attacks, it is the first time the PLO has called for revenge for a specific act.

A sign of changing times is evident in the territories with the increased frequency of armed attacks on Israeli citizens. Two Weeks after the Israeli killings, a West Bank Palestinian stabbed and killed three Israelis. He was hailed as a hero by fellow Palestinians

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<sup>203</sup>Algiers, Voice of Palestine in Arabic, October 9, 1990, as translated in FBIS-NES, October 11, 1990, p. 2.

<sup>204</sup>Sabra Chartrand, "Palestinian Stabs 3 Israelis Dead; Revenge for Mosque Melee is Seen," in The New York Times, (October 22, 1990), p. A7.

and his "success" inspired further acts of violence. Hamas leaders, in praising the killings stated:

We bless the hero who killed with his knife three soldiers from the enemy in Jerusalem. This is only the beginning.<sup>205</sup>

Thus, the latest round of violence in the territories has inspired violence beyond that previously known to the intifada. Although most acts still appear to be isolated incidents perpetrated by lone individuals, continued calls for violence from the UNLU and Hamas will no doubt inspire larger scale action in the future. It is presently unclear if indeed the PLO has control over events in the territories, but continuing escalation of violence will no doubt further damage the ailing PLO image.

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<sup>205</sup>Sabra Chartrand, "Assassin or Muslim Avenger, A West Bank Hero," in The New York Times, October 24, 1990, p. A7.



## VI. CONCLUSIONS

The Palestinian Liberation Organization has been the symbol of Palestinian nationalism almost from its inception. It was the early fedayeen attacks on Israeli targets that first gave the Palestinian people a chance to hope that perhaps their battle against occupation could be won. The PLO is the one symbol that unifies the majority of the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza and it is through the PLO that the Palestinian people have developed a Palestinian identity. Whether or not the people of the territories agree with the political tactics of Arafat, he is the symbol of the PLO and the symbol of Palestinian pride and nationalism. Such deep roots and strong affiliation are not easily dismissed or challenged. Of the groups discussed however, there are several who are rivaling the PLO's authority and who threaten to upset the status quo in the territories.

The rise of the intifada injected the West Bank and Gaza Palestinians with a renewed sense of pride and hope that through organization and unity, the dream of a Palestinian state could be realized. This new sense of self-confidence promoted the development of internally supported political groups. As the primary force representing the internal PLO factions, the UNLU chose (or was perhaps coerced), to accept the external PLO as the ultimate authority in directing the intifada. Although the PLO is responsible for setting broad political strategy, the internal organization was not content to exist as a non-political force that merely enforced PLO policy. According to Ambassador Robert Neumann, the internal leadership is very independent, but it chooses to use the PLO as its political representative.<sup>206</sup> The new internal leadership had a political agenda of its own that could not be ignored by the external leadership. The youth of the territory were prepared to die in

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<sup>206</sup>Authors interview on September 26, 1990.

the struggle to end the Israeli occupation. Their views therefore, had to be a consideration in determining what course the intifada would follow and what political concessions would be made to move the peace process forward. The decision of the 19th PNC was one example of the rising influence of the territories' internal leadership.

The majority of Palestinians still claim the PLO as their legitimate representative, but as the intifada continues and no progress is made, internal challenges to the PLO's previously unquestioned authority are coming from several directions. An article printed in late 1989 declared: "Palestinians under occupation are growing weary - and indeed angry - with the apparent prevarication of the external leadership."<sup>207</sup> The moderates within the territories who supported the PLO's recognition of Israel and acceptance of UN resolutions 242 and 338, are quickly losing their legitimacy. Israel's continued treatment of Palestinians as second class citizens with little or no legal rights and the continuing use of armed violence to control riots has also contributed to an increase in radicalization of the population. Author Emile Sahliyeh considers the continuing occupation to be a direct cause for the rise of radicalism in the territories.

Continuation of Israel's military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip will reinforce the position of extremist groups and proponents of radical ideologies. West Bank leaders can hardly maintain a moderate and a pragmatic stance without concrete evidence of Israel's flexibility and political liberalization.<sup>208</sup>

Israel has thus found itself in a dangerous spiral with the Palestinian people. The people of the territories, angry at the continuing occupation, incite the soldiers through stone throwing attacks and the soldiers respond with gunfire, causing an increase in tension and a call for revenge.

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<sup>207</sup>"The Price of No Solution," in The Middle East, (November, 1989), p. 14.

<sup>208</sup>Sahliyeh, p. 179.

The most recent rash of armed violence by Palestinians against Israeli citizens is one indication of increasing radicalism in the territories and represents a lack of control over events by the external and even possibly the internal leadership. Although it is difficult to determine at this early stage whether or not the current violence perpetrated by individual Palestinians is connected to any greater movement, it appears the radical elements are gaining the upper hand through their promotion of increased violence in the territories.

Of the groups studied, the only ones capable of eventually rivaling the PLO for control in the territories, are the shock committees and Hamas. Of these two groups, neither appears to have a strong charismatic leader who could vie for Arafat's position as leader of the Palestinians. Israel's policy of arresting and deporting any known leaders within the territories is perhaps partly to blame for the failure of either group to produce a strong leader. The elaborate intelligence network of the Israeli government is capable of decapitating any potential leadership even before it actually comes to power. Although the shock committees are not a separate political entity with a mass following in the territories, their strong organizational structure and militancy could fuel increased acts of violence. Hamas, on the other hand, has a political agenda and a moderate following in the territories. While neither group presents a direct leadership challenge to the PLO's authority, their growing popularity will result in an increase in political clout. Thus, although there may not be an alternative internal leadership capable of vying for the top leadership position, there are internal groups with enough popular support to render them capable of influencing the policy decisions of the PLO. PLO policies that were once influenced by the politics of moderates, will become increasingly subjected to the influences of these radical internal forces and will be forced to follow the changing political mainstream or risk losing popular support. The moderates in the territories, according to Dr. Erika Alin of the National Council on U.S.-Arab relations, feel a sense of urgency to

have the peace process move forward. They have waited two years since their people accepted Israel and as a result, have noted an increase in radicalization.<sup>209</sup>

The primary force affecting Palestinian politics at the present, is the Gulf Crisis. The express support for Saddam Hussein has been a large gamble for the Palestinians, but with no other options available, it had to be taken. They have already suffered a loss of support from Arab countries and a loss of international sympathy for the Palestinian cause. If Saddam loses in the face of Western aggression, hope for an Arab solution to the Palestinian problem will once again be lost. Saddam's loss would undoubtedly bring an increase in support for the Islamic movements. As often happens when in the depths of despair, man reaches for religion. As Dr. Erika Alin stated, Saddam's loss would be "a loss for secularism as opposed to fundamentalism."<sup>210</sup> If on the other hand, Saddam is perceived as having won the fight against imperialism, his radical ideologies may serve to speed the process of radicalization in the territories. Either way, the moderates lose.

The PLO of 1988 is not the PLO of 1990 and as violence in the territories increases, the PLO of the future will no doubt have a greater following among radical factions. Israel, therefore, by refusing to talk to the PLO, may have missed the opportunity to negotiate with the Palestinian leadership at its most moderate position. If Hamas continues to gain influence, the end result may be adherence to the goal of a Palestinian state in all of historic Palestine. As author Graham Fuller stated in The West Bank of Israel, Point of No Return?, the emerging leadership in the territories could "...come one day to constitute that 'independent leadership' on the West Bank that the Israelis claim they have been looking

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<sup>209</sup> Author's interview on September 24, 1990.

<sup>210</sup> Author's interview on September 24, 1990.

for all along - except that it will never present the malleability that Israel had been hoping for and it will not settle for what Israel proposes to offer."<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>211</sup>Fuller, p. 13.

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